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Sailors of fortune
McFee, William

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SAILORS OF FORTUNE

BY WILLIAM McFEE

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TO

MR. AND MRS.
GEORGE T. KEATING

In Friendship

428736

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William McFee

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A SON
OF THE COMMODORE

I

NONE of his own people could ever make anything out of him, and when he went to sea in foreign charters he left no empty chair at home.

That strangeness of character began in his childhood at Princes Park, Liverpool, where his mother, widow of Captain Beckett, late Afro-Iberian Mail Line, had a select boarding house for captains and their wives. Philip kept himself to himself while he lived at home. As a schoolboy he slipped in and out of the house like a shadow, with his worn leather satchel over his left shoulder, his grammar-school cap on the back of his head, a lithe, dark, and uncommunicative lad. Ladies, waiting for their shipmaster husbands to arrive, were disappointed with him when they made motherly overtures. He gave them uncomfortable glances of dark derision.

They didn't like his attitude towards his mother. When Mrs. Beckett called him he came instantly, smiling a little; but he did not carol cheerily, "Yes, Mother," or "Right-o, Mummy." He ran errands and helped his mother as well as most boys, but he encouraged no familiarities. Nor when the ladies spoke of him to his mother did she divulge her thoughts.

She was the widow of the famous Captain Freddie Beckett, who had been the peculiar glory, in times past, of the Afro-Iberian Mail. Captain Beckett's fame rested largely upon numerous successful rescues at sea, which had drawn public attention to his dashing character. He had been what was known in those days as a dashing officer. When

he was in the *Pamplona*, the first of the Line's twin-screw mail steamers running between Liverpool and Bombay, Captain Beckett was often entrusted with the special care of the wives and daughters of high officials travelling alone. He kept his ship as smart as a yacht. He was inexorable concerning discipline and deportment. He was foremost in every social activity. He was handsome and debonair. He was one of the most popular and best known captains in the service. He had his uniforms cut by an expensive and exclusive tailor. He lived a life of professional glory. He numbered many distinguished people among his acquaintances. He inspired a slightly confused awe in the minds of his brother commanders. And when he died—quite suddenly, at Malta—on the voyage home, it was found that he had left Mrs. Beckett without a penny. His sole bequests consisted of three presentation chronometers, several illuminated addresses, a pair of silver-mounted binoculars, a gold watch presented by a foreign monarch for saving the crew of a dismasted bark, and the order of St. Theodosius, Fourth Class, bestowed on the occasion of Captain Beckett's arrival with a party of plenipotentiaries for a conference of the Powers at the conclusion of a Balkan war.

It was a gray finish to a married life which had begun in a blaze of glory. The dashing Captain Beckett when chief officer had met the dark and beautiful Annie Pollock at a dance and had wooed and won her between the arrival of the ship on Sunday evening and her departure the following Saturday noon. He had taken her, at eighteen, from half a dozen men who had wanted her. Some of them had become prosperous business men.

To some women the future, even with the handsome check contributed by the officers and directors of the Line, would have seemed too dark to face. Mrs. Beckett faced it without

flinching. She had been in the background, overshadowed by the reputation of her dashing husband. She had been always "Captain Beckett's wife." Now she became Mrs. Beckett. Mrs. Beckett's place became famous in its modest way. She started a boarding house which was to find its clientele principally among her own people. Sometimes, as a favour, a veteran chief officer and his wife would be found a room (at the top of the house). But mostly Mrs. Beckett had her rooms occupied by captains and their ladies. From Penarth and Erith, from suburbs of Glasgow, London, and Newcastle those ladies came, stout and slender, bumptious and timid, parsons' daughters and ex-barmaids who had taken the adventurous plunge into matrimony with men who spent their lives in distant seas. Children she did not debar entirely, but she did not encourage them. Mrs. Beckett's place got a name in the port as a comfortable lodging where shipmasters might pass the few days they were in harbour. In the offices of agents and ship chandlers they would hear about it. "Why don't you try Mrs. Beckett's? Very comfortable. Up at Princes Park. Tramcar passes the end of the street. Her husband was Freddie Beckett of the *Pamplona*. Remember?" And soon another respectable middle-aged couple would be installed in one of Mrs. Beckett's pleasant rooms. Mrs. Beckett became an institution.

But it was an institution that young Philip Beckett did not care about from the beginning. He could not accept it as part of his lot in life. He preserved an impenetrable silence concerning it. He came and went, using the basement door to avoid meeting the lodgers, doing his homework in the downstairs breakfast room, always with the air of making the best of things for a few days, of being a lodger himself in that house. Philip, indeed, always had that air of dark, smiling transience.

And his mother, who had no loquacity herself, as her fortunes stabilized and she was able to keep her boy on at the grammar school to pass examination after examination—"one of our brightest pupils, Mrs. Beckett"—began to have vague ideas for his future. She began to wonder whether the Line would feel hurt if she did not accept their standing offer to take Philip without a premium. Perhaps he could be a doctor or go into an office. The financial hollowness of her husband's glory had been borne in upon her as the years passed. Many a commander of a bluff-browed, black-funnelled tramp steamer, spending a few days with his wife at Mrs. Beckett's place, had his thousand pounds laid away in sound securities besides a decent life insurance policy that would keep his family from want. Mrs. Beckett, looking at Philip as he sat studying at the round table in the breakfast room, his thin dark face (so like his father's) reflecting the lamplight from the white paper, desired passionately for him a career of financial prosperity. It was only natural that she should lay stress on the money he might make. She still cherished in her heart a feeling of bitterness over the sudden genteel surprise among the neighbours in Princes Park that Captain Fred Beckett hadn't left her a penny. It seemed to reflect upon her own intelligence to have married so showy a husband. And she detected in Philip, under his silence, a sense of the past as a humiliating episode, something to be lived down and built over, obliterated and forgotten by main strength.

But Mrs. Beckett, looking at Philip doing his lessons, or going out in his football gear (he was a sinewy and clever forward), had no such feeling of shame for the present. Her business had a quiet solidity that was likely to last as long as British ships sailed the seas and sea captains loved their wives. Moreover, she was now forty years old,

a handsome, dark, steady-eyed woman of unmistakable character, her hair not yet gray, looking out challengingly upon a world in which, economically, she had had no place. In 1914, when Philip was sixteen, Mrs. Beckett was thinking of the future in terms of placid prosperity. She had made inquiries about an estate agent in the city who wanted an articled pupil. Philip had just passed his final examinations at school with honours. The head master wanted him to go up for the London Matriculation that winter. The estate agency was a clean, gentlemanly profession. Liverpool was growing fast out in the suburbs. Mrs. Beckett, when the summer vacation began, told Philip. He shook his head.

"Then what do you want to do?" she asked, looking at the back of her hands. Philip developed the same mannerism as he grew up.

"Go to sea," said Philip, smiling.

What Mrs. Beckett had not foreseen was the way in which Philip's fundamental antipathy to the circumstances of his childhood had worked to the surface as a reluctance to go on living at home. He was consumed with a desire to go away, to leave the boarding house and the memories of his father behind. He was acutely aware of those illuminated addresses in their frames upstairs. They made him feel uncomfortable. They were for him symbols of a father in whom he could not believe, an impossible figure of romance. He wanted to escape into a world of reality.

But the only way of escape he could think of was the sea.

"Go to sea?" repeated Mrs. Beckett. She seemed to be reading the true significance of his words in the vigorous contours of her hands.

She did not make any further remark. A month later Philip sailed as apprentice on the Afro-Iberian Mail Steamer *Vallombrosa.* A month after that, when his ship

was starting homeward from the Brazils, he brought a message from the wireless house to the bridge and stood at attention, smiling, while the captain, who had been third officer under dashing Fred Beckett, read the news that Europe was at war.

II

Young Beckett, following his profession during the next four years, found rich nourishment for his slightly ironical attitude towards life. He was almost morbidly resolute to avoid any of the spectacular and histrionic features of his father's career. But it was not easy. The *Vallombrosa* was one of the first vessels to be sunk by gunfire after the passengers and crew had taken to the boats. Young Beckett, in attendance on his commander, in the motor launch which all the liners carried, had to dive under her stern and cut away a rope which was snarled round her propeller. When he went to sea, to complete his apprenticeship, in the *Vittoriosa*, the fourth officer was left behind in the hospital with a broken collarbone, and Philip came home in that capacity. Coming up Channel he spotted a periscope ahead and he put the helm hard over, without even speaking to the helmsman, so suddenly the ship canted like a yawl. He was reported as having saved the ship by his vigilance and presence of mind, and he remained fourth officer until a torpedo sent her to the bottom.

Philip, passing his examination for second mate with the easy condescension of a clever, well-educated youth, was unable to get his bearings. The world seemed to have gone to smash. It was the sort of world, now, in which his father would have shone. There were uniforms everywhere; medals and decorations came thick as autumn leaves upon the services. Merchant captains were knighted. Dashing Fred Beckett would have been knighted for sure, Philip

thought as he watched the horizon over the dodger of the transport *Salamanca*, of which he was third officer. His mother would have been Lady Beckett. He saw other men going into the navy and air force, into the naval reserve, going about in magnificent uniforms. Philip made no move to follow them. He saw them carried away by the social possibilities of temporary promotions. Men whose families lived in shabby back streets, whose wives took lodgers, strutted like admirals. Philip read and heard earnest messages announcing that all pretense was swept away in this hour of the nation's bitter adversity. To him it seemed as if men were performing in fancy dress.

Yet he could not avoid being what was called a hero. He had been born with what is called "control." When things happened without warning and with heart-shattering speed, as when the *Salamanca* struck a mine in the Ægean while in a dense fog, Philip became cool and methodical. He stood off and watched himself go through the correct motions of an officer on duty on the bridge of a ship which might or might not sink. Boats were lowered to the water. Hydraulic doors were closed by Philip with a turn of the hand. The ship's papers, in a weighted bag, were brought out on the bridge. With engines stopped, and listing heavily, the *Salamanca* lay silent in the fog. Philip stood by the telegraph, watching the inclinometer and wondering how long it would be before she turned over. He could not decide which end of the bridge would make the safer exit. He waited. He heard the commander behind him speaking into the engine-room telephone. He was ordering a shifting of water ballast. Philip stood looking at the inclinometer. The indicator was stationary. He heard the words "All right, Chief!" and then the boatswain's whistle shrilled forward. He saw shadowy forms grappling with a monstrous thick python on the foredeck, a python that

unrolled into a collision mat. The gunner had told Philip those things were made in the jails. Men were serving their country, in jails. A winch began to stutter and hiss. The indicator of the inclinometer had moved up a little. He could hear great pumps sobbing far down in the ship. She was coming up. The commander, who had known Captain Beckett slightly, said suddenly and bitterly over Philip's shoulder: "Who would sell a farm and go to sea?"

Philip looked at him, smiling. It was a sentiment he could understand.

III

The end of the war found Philip acting chief officer of the *Melilla*, a hurriedly built cargo carrier engaged in the Mediterranean trade. He was twenty-one and he could only expect to hold his billet until the navy released the company's senior officers. But he had been extraordinarily successful. Even allowing for the opportunity the war had provided, he had been successful. He had been found adequate to every emergency and situation. There was no reason, apart from the regulations, why he could not go up and pass for master at once. The captains he had served spoke with temperate enthusiasm of his work as the ship's executive. So far as his professional duties were concerned he got on well with the other departments.

But he had no friends. If they had any feeling at all about Philip Beckett it was a feeling of fear. Elderly second officers, spruce and ambitious third mates who were destined to seek employment later as quartermasters while they waited for promotion, regarded "young Mr. Beckett" with a slightly bewildered respect. Any resentment they might have felt for one so young holding dominion over them was modified by the legend that "his old man had been commodore of the fleet" and by the impeccable validity of

Philip's own professional character. He was always cool. He never shouted. He gave them the impression that they were clumsy and ignorant shellbacks. They had no feeling that he was one of them. They remembered the many disasters from which he had emerged with effortless efficiency and a brilliant record. And they left him alone.

And as the years passed he became a legend, which is easy when a man goes regularly to sea. He became a legend for the Afro-Iberian Mail men. Those who had sailed awhile with him had carried his name into other companies. But he was no legend to himself. He was aware of nothing extraordinary in what he had done. He was, indeed, conscious of abilities which seemed destined to have no employment so long as he remained at sea. He did not chafe; he did his work. He kept himself fit. He saved his wages. He waited.

His mother, when he was home passing for master, began to look older. Early in the war something had happened to Mrs. Beckett. One of the lodgers had been an iron-gray naval commander from Devonport who was superintending the work in the yards. They were converting liners into fast cruisers. He took the electric car to the yards every day. There were few captains' wives visiting at that time. When one of the ships was ready Commander Engworthy was to go with her. During the weeks of waiting he came to an understanding with Mrs. Beckett. He would get his four stripes at the end of the year. They could live at Devonport. His wife had been dead ten years. He did not want to live alone for the rest of his life. He sailed. The ship was torpedoed in the Channel.

Nothing happened save that Philip's mother, passing the grand climacteric, suddenly seemed older. She became absorbed in her business, which now occupied the two houses adjoining. When Philip refused to live out there

while studying, saying it was too far from the navigation school, she nodded and made no comment. She knew now that her son had transferred the feeling he had preserved of his father's career to the boarding house. The knowledge came to her by a sort of instinct, a spiritual reincarnation that women experience when their children reach the age at which they themselves first endured the pangs of love. It made Mrs. Beckett stubborn. She would have sold her business to marry Captain Engworthy. But now she had crossed the line she found herself challenging this easy, smiling, self-possessed young man as though he were a potential enemy. She saw in him the outlines of his father's character. Under the veneer of his irony Philip, in his mother's shrewd eyes, was the dashing Freddie Beckett she had married when he was chief officer of the old *Aramaya*. He seemed destined to fill the same rôle in the future. She was aware of that flair in his character for the spectacular, a sort of grandeur in his mind, which held him back so long as he was not a magnificent commander.

Something of this was known to Philip himself. When he had passed for master, the owner of "a steamer ticket" because he had never served in sail, he faced the question —what sort of skipper might there be in him? He became aware of the great gap yawning between the responsibility he knew and the lonely burden of command. He spoke to no one of this, for he had no friends to whom such a confession would mean very much. The war, of which Philip himself was a product, had left the old-time sea officer's mind in some confusion. He was distrustful of the young fellows like Philip and invited no confidences from them. Philip offered none.

He went to sea promptly, chief officer of the new *Pamplona*, a fine ship chartered by a tourist agency to carry Americans about the world. "Come to the Ports of Joy,"

was the advertising slogan. "Visit the Harbors of Romance." Old Captain Moseley, the marine superintendent, said to Captain Montague:

"You remember his father? Young Beckett is a chip of the old block, if I am not mistaken. He will get on in the passenger ships."

Captain Montague was a big imposing figure of a man. As a matter of fact he had been chief officer on that voyage when Captain Freddie Beckett, relinquishing the gaieties of the promenade deck as the old *Pamplona* left Port Said, had taken to his bed and had died in the hospital at Malta. Captain Montague had taken the ship home to Liverpool. Nobody had ever heard him make any allusion to his predecessor. Captain Montague uttered no opinions about anybody in the service. He gave an outsider the feeling that to speak of the other employees of the firm was beneath his dignity. He maintained, from the moment of his accession to command, an impregnable composure, an aplomb, an air of being so absolutely beyond mortal criticism that he could never be in a position to be called to account for his actions. And as a matter of fact he was a successful commander. He took over each new ship as she came from the builder's hands. He was so associated with the latest improvements in steamship design, it was difficult, hearing him point out (briefly) their merits, not to conclude he had designed the ship. His success had been outlined more than once against the misfortunes of other captains. The voyage after he resigned the *Aramaya* she ran aground outside Havana. That it was the fault of the pilot and a phenomenal tide-rip in no way diminished the impression at the back of men's minds that Captain Montague would not have done that. Whether they want to or not, men believe in a goddess of Fortune. They believe some men are born lucky. Captain Montague was one of those men. He

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would have been more than human to doubt it himself. As the years passed, years of serene, unblemished command, the conviction that he was incapable of the minor imperfections of ordinary men gained force within him. It was all the stronger because it never became articulate. It dwelt far down in his consciousness that George Pilkington Montague was not like other men in command. Every voyage seemed to prove it.

He had experienced, as the years passed, a surcease of the secret fear which had abode with him through the war. Sometimes it held him even now as he stood on the bridge, an impassive figure nobly caparisoned in blue and gold. Sometimes the tremendous deliberation of his manner masked a sudden return of that fear of foundering. He would remain motionless and silent for a moment, gazing ahead, his hand steady on the bridge rail; and then, imposing as ever, he would give his orders.

No one alive knew of this quality behind Captain Montague's formidable composure. He would forget it himself for a while. He continued his career of unimpaired professional success. And among his passenger friends he discovered a means of confirming the verdict of the years. They were men mostly of assured wealth and position in America. They treated him as one of themselves. They invited him out to Larchmont and Syosset for golf. He was a member of a New York Club. He lived in a world inaccessible to a young man like Philip, a serene region of unquestioned command, peopled by powerful financial executives, Wall Street operators, and Fifth Avenue merchants who listened to his stories and recommended the *Pamplona* to their friends. Captain Montague gave select luncheon parties on board while in harbour, and the Afro-Iberian Mail's advertising manager admitted that Captain Montague was worth ten thousand dollars a year to the Com-

pany in the rotogravures alone. Singers and actresses delighted to be photographed with the captain beside them. His large handsome features with the gold-rimmed monocle, his broad figure bearing the regulation ribbons of war service, were admirably complementary to the beautiful women clothed in Paris gowns and breathing the sharp electric air of New York. He was the heroic male bringing in safely a delicate feminine cargo from the ports of joy.

But Captain Montague did not capitalize his position to make friendships among women. He was married. He had a flair for solid wealth and prestige. He inspired, not admiration, but confidence. He had all the handsome solidity, viewed from the outside, of a Greco-Roman bank building in a prosperous American city.

"Remember his father?" he said to Captain Moseley, when young Philip was mentioned. "Yes. I was with him, you know, in the—why, the old *Pamplona*."

Captain Moseley looked down at his own small and extremely neat black shoes. They were sitting in Captain Montague's quarters.

"Of course," he said, looking up quickly. "You brought her home. I'd forgotten that. I was in the *Biskra*. Well, this is the son."

"And a chip off the old block, eh?"

"That doesn't mean that he has any drag over the rest of us, Captain," said the superintendent. "He has come up quickly, but he has always earned his promotion. I needn't tell you that we have plenty of men, good officers too, who are not comfortable in ships with first-class passengers. Young Beckett seems to be the type we need for these ships."

Captain Montague knew perfectly well the sort of men the superintendent meant. "Shellbacks and pot wallopers,"

he called them himself. Some of them, if they were in command for a voyage, never left their quarters, never went down to dinner, never appeared among the passengers at all. Impossible fellows. Did the Company no end of harm. Captain Montague had heard what passengers thought of them.

As he sat alone in his cabin after this interview, Captain Montague thought of the past which he had buried under so many years of imposing success like a corpse beneath a monument of splendidly polished stones. He thought of his life with Captain Freddie Beckett, the famous Captain Beckett. It had not been a particularly happy one for him. Beckett had made no bones of telling him what he thought of him. After an accident going into Gibraltar, a slight graze on the bows when a hawser parted and a sailor was dreadfully mangled, Captain Beckett said to him, settling his chin into his wing collar, "Why, my God, man, you aren't yellow, are you?" Adding, after a moment's scrutiny and a short laugh, "I wouldn't put it past you."

Nothing he could do seemed to change Captain Beckett's fundamental conviction that his chief officer was bound to fall down on his job "if anything ever really does crop up." It had gone on voyage after voyage. Of course, no one else had heard these sentiments. Captain Beckett was not the man to say anything about his chief officer to a third party. But he had said once, after a difference of opinion about the stowage, "And I suppose you think you could take charge!"

And then Captain Montague, sitting very still and staring across his comfortable sitting room in the *Pamplona*, thought of that last voyage, when he had gone up to report the discovery of three Lascar stowaways in the 'tween-deck bunker, and he had found Captain Beckett

lying flat on his bed place, looking shockingly ill. Captain Beckett told the doctor, when he was called, that it was all nonsense. It was not nonsense. Next day the *Pamplona* docked in Valetta and Captain Freddie Beckett was rushed to the hospital for an operation, under which he expired. He had lain in a coma. When the chief officer had looked in on him he had regarded him with an enigmatic sidelong look out of the half-shut lids. It was as though he knew of those stowaways by intuition. It would be only what he expected of his chief officer. There was, on his unshaven, haggard face, with the heavy drops of perspiration breaking out and running athwart the fine gray hair of the temple, an expression of grim anticipation, of sardonic certainty that Montague was not equal to taking a wheelbarrow down the street by himself.

It was a curious thing, Captain Montague reflected, that the dashing Captain Beckett's ways with his officers and crew had not lived on in legend. Only his wonderfully successful career was remembered. And as year followed year of command Captain Montague began to doubt Captain Beckett's judgment. Not with a whole heart did he doubt it. Even in the hospital the dying man had given his successor a single glance of authentic distrust. It expressed his conviction that there was a flaw somewhere, that the man was unable to carry the load.

But he had carried it all these years! Somewhere inside his mind Captain Montague had cornered that fear of foundering, got it down and locked it in a secret chamber. But only he himself was aware of that phrase of Captain Beckett's, "if anything really does crop up." Only he himself knew that nothing had ever cropped up. He had carried the load. He ought to be able to carry it to the end now.

He had found himself thinking of the new chief officer.

He had a mind without subtlety, and he was incapable of perceiving metaphysical analogies. But he had been startled when that chip of the old block had stepped into his cabin and announced that he had joined. There was not very much superficial resemblance between Captain Beckett and his son. But it was there. Captain Montague saw it. The relationship between them was established in the first glance of the young man as he stood carefully closing the door.

"I sailed with your father," said the captain.

"So I hear," said Philip, looking round the room at the comfortable furnishings.

"Before you were born, almost," said the Captain in a low tone, as though he were debating the wisdom of such a confession. "In the old *Pamplona*, Bombay and Liverpool. I brought the ship home when we had to leave him in Malta. I suppose you know what he died of? Appendicitis. The Prince of Wales had had it. Nearly died of it, the Prince did. It was quite a fashion in those days, after the Prince of Wales had it. Appendicitis. Now everybody has it."

He had gone on longer than he intended. The young man had not cut in. Now Philip remarked:

"I've had it. During the war."

There was a silence which both of them remembered. It was not a mere period of silence between two sentences. It was a narrow but fathomless crevasse suddenly opened between the two men. They never entirely bridged that crevasse. Several times Captain Montague, pinching his lower lip in a way he had, raised his eyes and glanced at Philip before he said at last:

"You had better say good-bye to your young lady. The office expects us to be away a year on charter."

Philip made a sign of assent and looked cynically at a

huge silver vase full of flowers. He read the inscription: "Presented to Captain George S. Montague by the Western Women's Oriental Mission Delegates as a token of their regard for his chivalrous conduct and superb seamanship. . . ." Philip looked away to a water colour of Constantinople, "Presented to . . ."

"All right, Captain," he said, and swung suddenly away to the door.

Captain Montague recalled the conversation later in New York. He was on the point of going uptown to dinner with a wealthy friend. They had been a week in harbour preparing for a Mediterranean voyage. The chief officer suddenly knocked and entered. He was dressed for going ashore. He said he would like the next morning off.

"What's the matter?" asked the captain. He was putting on a dress tie. His large, firmly modelled face, rose-tanned by weather, shone in the mirror above the dazzling white shirt.

"I'm getting married," said Philip, and Captain Montague turned round.

"You—you're what?" he said, and he frowned as he tried to remember what he knew of young Beckett. "I thought you had a young lady in Liverpool." Philip shook his head. "Well . . . it's an unusual request, Mr. Beckett, but I've no doubt you know your own business best. It's a long voyage, you know."

"To the Mediterranean?" said Philip.

"No, to the churchyard. I was alluding to matrimony, not the Mediterranean," said Captain Montague, taking up a white satin waistcoat and giving it a little shake. "And you want to make sure you know your mate," he added, rather to his own surprise.

Philip made no reply. It was one of his most characteristic habits, to make no reply to a general observation. And

Captain Montague discovered next morning, when he mentioned Philip's request to the second officer, that not a soul on board was aware of it.

"I gave him the whole day," he said. "It's not much of a honeymoon, but he chose a funny time for it. Day before sailing!"

Down in the officer's mess room, a place usually devoted to letter writing and cards, they discussed the affair.

"All the same," said the senior third, "there wasn't any particular reason why he should say anything about his private affairs. The second mate of the *Vallombrosa* was with him in the war. He told me Beckett's a smart officer all right, but he keeps everybody at their distance. His old man was commodore, they say, years ago."

"He needn't make a man feel as if he was dirt under his feet," said the senior fourth with some heat.

"I don't think he means to do that," said the second judicially, conscious of being in charge of the ship for a few hours. "In fact, I don't know why we discuss him, come to think of it. He's Number One. I suppose he's what they call brilliant ashore. That's what he is, brilliant."

"If you ask me," said the senior third, "I think it's a wonder he told the Old Man. It's a wonder he didn't just ask for time off without saying what he wanted it for. That's the sort of chap he is. The second mate of the *Vallombrosa* told me they used to say they didn't need any refrigerating gear with Beckett on board of her. That's how cool he is."

"That's right too," said the senior apprentice, who was acting junior fourth mate, and who was now leaning his stalwart frame against the door. "He wasn't long getting wise to Chips, either. You know how that Scandinoogian fancies himself because he's been here so long with this Old Man. Thinks he owns the ship and don't know enough

English to say so. Faithful retainer business. Mr. Beckett showed him where he'd left the grummets hanging out on the half-doors in the working alley. Chips was as mad as hell about it. 'Ai, Mister! I ban see plenty chief mates . . .' You know how he squeals. Mr. Beckett gave it him all right. I was behind him. Chips looked as if he was going to bash him with a wrench, but he funked."

"What beats me," took up the senior third, rubbing his chin, "is how he comes to go ashore and get married here in New York. He's never been here before, because I asked him as we came up Channel, and he said he hadn't. It's only a week since we arrived and——"

"You can do a lot in a week," said the second, pushing his cap back and scratching his forehead, "once you get started."

"Well, you ought to know. You've been here a good many weeks. But who's seen him with a skirt? Where would he——?"

"You'd better ask him when he gets back," suggested the second. "She'll probably come down to see him off. You can have a good look at her."

Captain Montague, that night, in a costly duplex apartment on Park Avenue, had joined in another conversation wherein the motives of men were analyzed. The war was being blamed for the breakdown of morale in the younger generation. It was blamed for the habit of plunging suddenly into matrimony on the spur of the moment and the ensuing crashes. Examples were cited. . . .

"Then what about my chief officer?" asked Captain Montague. He was cracking walnuts. His large handsome hands were impressively symbolical, as they held a nut firmly, of omnipotent destiny holding a planet. "He goes

all through the war, and since, without even looking at a woman, as far as I know; and suddenly he bolts ashore this morning and gets married. You can't blame the war for that."

"That may be explained by heredity, Captain," said a professor across the table.

"And is it a sign of degeneracy?" inquired another guest.

"Not at all," replied the professor, who had done the same thing himself. "Rather a symptom of sound vitality, even if not always an extremely intellectual one. Some men fall in love in the exact literal sense of the phrase. They pitch headlong into it. And they are usually men of excellently developed control: soldiers, sailors, men living dangerously. They are the sort of men who take charge as if by divine right, if you know what I mean, Captain."

There was heard for a moment the sound of walnut shells cracking sharply and Captain Montague said in an undertone, "I'm not sure that I do."

"Taking charge, as you call it," went on the captain above the hiss of a siphon, "is not a matter of divine right. It's a matter of long training and experience and seniority. Experience is what really counts. There's no substitute for experience."

"But is experience a substitute for character?" parried the professor. He had been on long scientific expeditions, but he did not speak of them. He had a thin sharp face and shrewd eyes.

"As how, for instance?" said the captain. He was holding a shelled nut in his fingers contemplating the dark ivory convolutions as some majestic superintelligence might gaze down at a fallible human brain.

"Well, in an emergency, when experience supplied no data. Something," the professor added slowly, "that had

never happened before and for which no precautions had been taken. Eh?"

"There's always a precedent," said the captain. "There's rules in every trade. You follow them or you don't, according to your experience."

"Or your instinct," said the professor, "which is another name for character."

IV

He had never been one of those men to whom opportunities for dalliance appear at every walk ashore. He had presented to the world, without self-assertion, nothing more romantic than the figure of a young professional seaman taking a short spell away from his duties. And when he stepped down the gangway of the *Pamplona* at her berth in the North River and walked, through the great shed piled high with cargo, towards the street, his mind held no clear thoughts at all, but only a vague pleasurable excitement at penetrating that enormous promontory of tall towers he had seen from the forecastle as the ship came up the river. Nothing of this showed on his keen, dark young face, however. He seemed only alert, scanning through an opening the load line of the ship's bows and the parcelling of her hawsers. Trucks and wagons, rolling in thunderously over the planking, made him step close to the heaps of merchandise. It was a pleasant day in late autumn, and the sunlight slanted through greenish panes above him. He saw big men in overalls smile as he passed, putting on dogskin gloves and with a polished yellow cane hooked on his arm. It did not occur to him that they might discover anything foppish in his appearance. He was incapable of such self-consciousness. He walked on until he came to the gate, where a tall fair girl stood talking to the customs guard.

He stopped suddenly, not only because he had to show his pass but because the girl gave him a look that changed, with a suddenness that left him wandering in his mind for a moment, the whole course of his spiritual life. Through the turmoil of his thoughts he heard the guard answering a question. He was surprised to discover that he himself had asked that question. He had said, as he folded up the pass and put it in his pocket, "What is the trouble?" and the guard, in a Federal gray uniform with shrewd gray eyes and a short gray moustache, as though his whole system had become saturated with an official and incorruptible neutrality, grumbled that the young lady wanted to go on the dock but she hadn't gotten herself a pass.

She said, "I didn't know it was necessary. And it doesn't matter a particle." She looked at Philip again with a faint amusement in her long greenish-blue eyes, as though she saw, and comprehended, the way her behaviour must appear to him.

"I can get you a pass," he said, "if you'll tell me who you want to see on board."

They moved away a little to let a truckman hand in some papers, and almost as by some magic they were outside and alone, cut adrift together from the organic complexity of the pier.

He looked at her and listened to her musical voice saying she didn't want to see anybody on the ship. What she wanted to see was the boat. She called the *Pamplona* a boat, as all women do, perhaps sensing the rivalry of a ship in the hearts of men. Philip looked at this girl, who had something of the fine lines and gallant carriage of a clipper, and lost himself in the grave music of her speech. She was dressed in a rough brown sports coat of modish design, with a small black hat on her bronze hair. She was very blonde, without the pinkish insipidity of many blonde girls, and there was

a blend of rustic good humour and metropolitan smartness in her appearance. Her gloves, her bag, her shoes and stockings, seemed to him to possess a lustre and distinction he could divine but could not classify, even if he had been undisturbed in his thoughts. He heard her say again that it was really nothing at all—all she wanted was to take a peek at the boat. She'd never seen a boat, and she'd taken the elevated downtown to see the sort of thing a boat was, that was all there was to it. And she smiled.

She was always smiling. It seemed to be the right expression for a face like hers. It wasn't that she was a fool or an idiot. It was just that her own special character came into view most vividly, as though the real significance of her words only became apparent when she smiled. She studied him a moment, because she could see in his face a slight bewilderment as she explained. She said she supposed he belonged to the boat if he could fix to get her a pass as easy as that.

"That's about how it is," he said. "You only have to say the word and I'll go back and write one out. I'll have to have your name and address and so forth, you know."

"You would?" She studied him again. "Some other time will do. I'm not that crazy to see it. Only—you'll laugh, I guess—I've never seen one except in pictures."

Neither of them, avoiding an approaching truck, noticed that they were walking away together. Without emphasis he took her arm and then was startled both at his own boldness and her acceptance of it. As they reached the cross-town street beyond the surge of outbound freight traffic he said:

"Do you know the way into the city?"

"I know the way back to the hotel," she answered doubtfully, "but I don't have to go there yet. Where are you going?"

"I'm like you about the ship," he said, smiling. "I've never seen this place before."

"Is that so?" she said, with relief. "Well, I haven't a single thing on you so far as that goes. I'm from 'way up state myself, and I've only just arrived. I know the hotel's on Park Avenue and all the nice shops are on Fifth, and I had to go 'way downtown in the subway to get a passport, and that's just about all I do know."

They walked along a street of indescribable squalor and desolation, where sunken stones alternated with deep excavations and sodden timbers. Children with faces like sharp predatory dwarfs played ball, and lean cats guarded basements that resembled temples of destitution. It was one of those streets the City of New York, with a sort of idiotic bravado, offers to the disembarking stranger, as though to test him before revealing to him her authentic splendour. But to Philip the street might have been flagged with marble and porphyry. He was absorbed in this girl who had suddenly possessed him with her gravely smiling eyes and mouth. Long green-gray-blue eyes and a mouth neither large nor small, but with lips cut clean and passionate and touched with crimson. He looked down at her feet, narrow and beautifully shaped in black pumps.

It was not, of course, that Philip had never seen a woman before. The significance of this new encounter lay in the fact that behind his casual conflicts had grown up an ideal who was everything the women he had ever met were not. And this slender, fair woman, who seemed poised on shining feet to float off into the upper reaches of the dusty New York sunlight, was what he had come to imagine a woman might be. Even to the long greenish-blue-gray eyes that turned to his with a strangely comprehending smile, as though her virginal loveliness concealed a maternal solicitude.

"That's more than I know," he admitted. "I've been on the Mediterranean and Indian routes mostly, you see."

"You're English, I guess, from your accent."

"That's right," he said, after a pause, the inevitable pause of an Englishman when he hears he has an accent. He had no idea of saying, "And you're American, I suppose, from your accent?" He did not identify her at all with the occasional overpowering globe trotters he had seen on Eastern cruises. She possessed, in spite of her modish clothes, an air of belonging to some provincial centre, as it might be a transfigured Liverpool, where they would be on equal terms. He expressed this feeling cautiously.

"I thought, when you were trying to get into the dock, that you were looking for a position."

"On the boat?" she smiled, and he nodded. "I've a position," she told him. "That's why I wanted to see the boat."

"You mean they've taken you on?" he asked, rather dismayed. The thought of this girl being a stewardess gave him a strange numb feeling. She might as well be on the other side of the world so far as he was concerned.

"Oh, no. I'm a nurse," she was saying. They passed under the Ninth Avenue elevated. "I'm taking care of a patient who's making the trip. So you see . . ." A train roared overhead.

"I'm awfully glad," he said, looking at her in a way quite unfamiliar to his shipmates. She smiled. It was obvious that she derived satisfaction from the situation herself. "You'll be on board the whole two months?"

"Unless I get left behind some place," she agreed with composure. "Have you a good position?" she went on.

"Well, it might be worse," he confessed. "Where are we going?" he asked.

"My name's Ruth—Ruth Brennan. What's yours?" she

said hurriedly, as though requiring an answer before she could tell him where they were going. And when he had spoken his name and added the information, without any air of bragging, that he was the chief officer of the *Pamplona*, it seemed to him that he was already on more intimate terms with her than with any other living person.

"And you don't know anybody in New York?"

"No, I was just coming ashore for a looksee," he told her, as though they had met on the beach of some tropical island and were wandering through the jungle together. He caught her eye as she turned to lòok at him.

"I understand," she said, and added, with her friendly, maternal smile, as though she had resolved all her little feminine doubts and fears. "Why, that's fine!"

Her voice made him think, in some obscure fashion, of white-coifed nuns talking musically in some fragrant convent garden.

Neither of them remembered much of what they did or where they went that first meeting. They talked. They were absorbed in each other as only a man and a woman of solitary habits can be when they have found in each other what they have unconsciously sought. In a restaurant with pink shaded lights they talked. Philip, to his astonishment, found himself comparing this girl with his mother. None of their talk was loquacity. They were engaged in sounding each other's uttermost depths of being. They sat tense and oblivious of outside happenings, facing each other, exploring their own souls, hearkening to their own histories. He compared this intercourse with the giggling girls he had met in Liverpool and understood why they had never been anything to him. She thought of the various men she had been engaged to, the interne in Albany, the metallurgical student at Schenectady, and the automobile salesman

of no particular place. She comprehended that what she had failed to find in them was character. They had tried to make an impression upon her, had bragged of their cars and jobs and salaries in an unintelligent way, as though she had been a susceptible fool. Not one of them had given her credit for the ability to size him up. She had been supposed to be entranced with his masculine antics.

After dinner they rode on a bus which took them along Riverside Drive. They alighted and walked between the trees and the parapet. They seemed to be walking upon the outer ramparts of Paradise. The distant shore, beyond the dark river, was aglitter with radiant legends and symbols, as though the inhabitants of that world were making energetic reports of what went on over there. At intervals they paused in their busy work to announce the time to the beings who, presumably, were living in an eternity of bliss.

"It's very convenient," Philip commented, as they sat on a seat. The busy electric mechanism finished its praise of a domestic article to remark that it was exactly nine thirty-five.

"What? Oh!" She saw him nod at the bright intelligence across the river, now praising an insecticide. "I don't know. Who wants to be told the time when one's having a good time?"

"Are you having a good time?" he asked.

"The best since I don't know when," she confessed. "I might as well tell you. Nursing isn't the soft snap people think."

"No?" he said. It occurred to him that being an officer, in a nice uniform, wasn't the soft snap people, passengers, imagined. Another notion struck him. He said:

"You wear a uniform, I suppose?"

"Sure. And it makes me look like nothing at all," she confided. "Do you wear one? I guess so. I'd like to see it."

"We won't recognize each other on the ship," he said speculatively.

"You mean we'd better not?" she hazarded.

"Well, there's something in that too," he surmised. "Yes, under the circumstances we might talk it over."

"Why?" she asked him bluntly, gazing over the ramparts into the blue darkness.

"Because——" For a moment he hesitated. He was not so good at explaining a thing like that. He was not sure she would understand. He would have to be careful, or she would think he was expressing a doubt of her ability to . . . It wasn't that. It was rather the departmental quality of a ship's life, which makes so many apparently simple actions impossible.

"I'd be busy," she said. "He's very troublesome sometimes." She was speaking of her employer, an elderly man of means.

"It's avoiding the talk that is most important," he ventured.

"Something like a hospital," she smiled, and he knew she understood.

It was her facility in detecting the imponderable elements of his mind which entranced him. He found in her attitude towards life a complement to his own. It was as though she had in her body the same thick, urgent yeoman blood. He had the sensation, walking beside her, of having known her a long time.

When he found a taxi and took her across town to the hotel where her employer was waiting for her, "full of complaints," as she remarked, Philip did not know what to do. He muttered that he must see her again.

"Some of your British blarney, I suppose," she said, watching him calculate the fare in dollars and cents. He got out and paid the man off.

"I'll walk to a bus," he said. "No," he took her arm gently. "No blarney in this case. Merely necessity. Must see you."

At the corner she stopped, looking at him with her slightly smiling, shrewd gray-green eyes. Suddenly she put her arm round his neck and kissed him. "I had the same idea," she said.

It was evident to him, in a day or two, that a crisis had come in his life and hers. That she was aware of it he knew by the way she would gaze at him, while he was speaking, in an intense absorption of mind, as though she were trying to accustom herself to the destiny which had suddenly materialized. He knew, also, that she had no more notion of evading that destiny than he had himself. It was assumed, in the region which lies at the back of formal thought, that the matter was already settled. But he knew also that she was waiting for him to take hold, to break the glamorous spell in which they were living, like two enchanted souls in a rose-tinted sphere. It was like a marvellous dream; and he knew that neither of them wanted to dream forever. To be "a hero" was distasteful; to be "a love-sick swain," as they used to be called, filled him with a dangerous unrest. He saw sailing day approaching with extraordinary rapidity, a sailing day which meant, for him, not parting from Ruth, but a fate much worse for a mind like his. He would have her on the ship, but he would not be able to dissociate her from the official life of the ship, which was his own life apart from her. He was driven to an unwonted display of emotion in the taxi as he took her to the hotel one evening.

"Why, what's the matter?" she asked. He had his arms round her, very tight indeed.

"I see only one way, if it is a way," he told her.

When he explained what was in his mind she said:

"Now? Before the boat sails?"

He nodded, keeping tight hold of her, as though there were a chance she might fly out of the taxi window and vanish. She looked out of that window and then at him.

"All right," she said. "My patient has a friend here who comes to see him. A politician. Leave it to me."

He did not see what a politician had to do with his getting married in a hurry, but he sensed the confidence in her voice. The next day was Thursday. She telephoned to him at the ship to meet her downtown in the forenoon. She stood on the steps of a public building of some sort. A stout gentleman, in yellow spats, with the seams of his coat bound with black braid, his eyeglasses on a black ribbon, lifted his hat. Philip gathered that this person was his friend to the extent of wishing him and Ruth every happiness. That evening, when he met Ruth uptown for an hour, he asked her the reason, and she told him.

"It's quite a story," she said, smiling to herself. "My patient, Mr. Probin, tells me everything. And these men who are always coming to see him thought that I was trying to hook him. I got a big laugh out of that. So when I said that on the contrary I would appreciate it if they could fix me a quick ceremony at the City Hall, why, they jumped at the chance. Then they made me promise not to resign before this trip. As if I would!"

"But you hadn't any intention of such a thing," he protested, a little distressed. "An old man of sixty, you said?"

"It wasn't that," she said. "He's very wealthy, and he's been married several times, and his friends know what often happens. They know invalids do marry their nurses."

"This one won't," said Philip. "He won't be able to."

"He mustn't know he won't be able to," said Ruth, "un-

til the boat has sailed. You don't want me to lose a good job, do you?"

To Captain Montague, outward bound for the Mediterranean, it was of no particular concern to hear that one of his passengers was a wealthy invalid capitalist with a nurse and secretary, a gentleman of obscure but powerful influence in state politics and national finance. Captain Montague proceeded upon his serene way, the figurehead of a perfectly operating organism. But in his private mind he did discover an interest in the fact that young Beckett, after a week in port, had gone ashore and got married. There was something that people would be justified in calling romantic in such a performance. Captain Montague had been engaged for several years and eventually only married after he had commanded a ship for some time. "To be on the safe side," as he had put it. He had known his wife a long while before he had become engaged. Nothing unusual in that, of course. Most men looked a lot before they leaped. But this young Beckett: what was one to make of a man who had married a strange girl the day previous to sailing and who hadn't even had her down to say good-bye when he sailed? What was one to say, anyhow, of a man who handled his job with cool efficiency and who offered no information about himself at all? Captain Montague, harking far back to his own nuptials, recalled jollifications and much badinage when he turned up in the Afro-Iberian Company's office to report for duty. In those subtle ways things get about, people he knew got to know about him and his girl. She came down to see him off too, when he took his ship down the Mersey. Waved to him from the landing stage. Looking over the bridge rail at young Beckett on the forecastle head Captain Montague had seen him wave to nobody save someone on the promenade deck

below: a curt, half-furtive, half-humorous gesture. Had his eye on the towboat and his hand back in his pocket almost at once. There was an air about him which Captain Montague could not fathom. Philip Beckett would dive into his room at eight o'clock instead of going down and spending an hour or so with the passengers. Only after lunch did he take this recreation, when most chief officers had a sleep. And it was during an afternoon conversation with some passengers, as the *Pamplona* slid through a warm blue ocean, that the Captain discovered what he called "the attraction." He saw a woman in a nurse's uniform standing in the entrance to one of the suites, while young Beckett, standing near by on deck, seemed to be carrying on a conversation.

Captain Montague, upstairs in his own quarters in his comfortable chair, could not let the problem alone. He found it unexpectedly engrossing to speculate upon the character of his chief officer, whose father had told him, Captain George Pilkington Montague, that if anything really did crop up he might not be able to carry the load. There was a sinister fascination in recalling how long ago that was and how mistaken Captain Beckett, the dashing Freddie Beckett, who had left his widow a pauper, turned out to be. Captain Montague's mind moved in deep, permanent grooves. It was as impossible for him to experience the lightning flash of an intuition as for the *Pamplona* to rise from the waves and float onward through the clouds. He would be out of his element. He had to reach his conclusions, as the ship reached port, by his customary route. And it was inevitable that the sight, on two successive afternoons, of young Beckett talking to the nurse at the door of that old man's suite led the commander to form a ponderously unfavourable opinion of a man who had been married a few days before.

It was the kind of tricky behaviour which he himself was qualified to score without mercy. The escapades which came so easily to many sea captains were simply unthinkable with Captain Montague. A woman might as conceivably have a flirtation with the *Pamplona's* spare anchor as with her commander. It might be a flight of flowery language to say he was eternally faithful to the woman he had married twenty-odd years ago and very rarely lived with owing to his calling; but it was literally accurate. And he possessed a stern, inarticulate dislike of men, like Captain Harry Musker, for instance, of the *Aramaya*, who "played round with skirts." He had an obstinate conviction that such men were fundamentally unreliable in professional matters. Subordinates, with the swift comprehension of their kind, sensed this conviction and took steps to keep all such activities out of their commander's way. Captain Montague rather prided himself upon the austere and exemplary conduct of his personnel. He kept his crew, he thought with satisfaction. The last chief officer had been promoted to one of the freighters. The chief cook and chief steward had been with him for years. So had Chips, the carpenter, old Gustaffsen—Captain Montague had great confidence in Gustaffsen, and often discussed things with him, afterwards telling the chief officer that Chips was going to do so-and-so.

Captain Montague sat in his chair, perfectly still, his big hands interlaced, thinking that young Beckett had been riding old Chips. That taciturn person, who never spoke to anyone save the officers and only then when spoken to in a peremptory shout, had been caulking the boat deck near the commander's chair. Without ceasing to wield his maul he had grunted to Captain Montague that "dis new chiff mate git affter me all time when he don't git affter

dat nurse. Noddinks ay do suits him. *Jawohl*, nex' voy'ge ay don' sign on, dat's all."

"You'll sign on if I tell you to," said the captain. "And dry up about the chief mate. When I want you to tell tales, I'll tell you to tell tales."

"Dat nurse talk to nobotty else, Missis Eriksen tell me. She say dat gel's a no account gettin' affter man joost married. . . ."

"The stewardess seems to be getting after you," said the captain, filing his nails.

"Ay! All right. I shut my trap."

Captain Montague said he'd better, and the carpenter redoubled the force of his maul on the caulking chisel. Nevertheless, going down to the promenade deck himself he was forced to observe that young Beckett was to be found during the afternoon at frequent intervals in conversation with a girl in nursing uniform who remained in the passage leading to the suite, as though she were daring the man outside to come in. He not only never did enter, he betrayed not the slightest embarrassment when other people, deck steward or passengers, stopped to join the group. But when they had passed on he remained. Once the captain saw him go up to his room and return with a book, which he handed to the girl inside. Sometimes she was not visible at all, and the talk took place at one of the windows. Young Beckett would stand close and talk in at the patient, who lay in a bed below. The ship's surgeon was often one of the party. Captain Montague, moving through the ranks of deck chairs and descending to a lower deck where he could gain a private stairway to the bridge, was unable to convince himself that young Beckett was "up to anything funny." There was only the twanging whine of old Gustaffsen and the strangeness of a newly married man suddenly striking up a steady acquaintance

with "a girl of that class." So he thought to himself of Ruth Brennan without troubling to get a look at either her or her patient. Captain Montague confined himself mostly to the people who sat at his own table.

What he really wanted to know, as the *Pamplona* neared her first port in the Madeira Islands, was why he could not leave young Beckett to his own devices. As the days passed he found himself preoccupied with the problem to an extent beyond his own belief. There were moments, when young Beckett was standing at the door of the captain's room, or was seated in his own cabin and turning to look at his commander, when it seemed to Captain Montague as though dashing Freddie Beckett were looking at him, alert and suspecting a rotten spot in him somewhere, questioning the years since that day in Valetta when his successor looked down at him before going on board to take his job, commanding the old *Pamplona*. Back in his own privacy Captain Montague would look steadily at the collected symbols of his career and fumble with the fact that here, on the new *Pamplona*, was a Beckett who had had appendicitis and was cured.

He was thunderstruck when young Beckett spoke of the nurse himself.

"She's all worn out with that old man," said Philip. "She takes night duty. The secretary does for him while Miss Brennan gets turned in."

"What do you want to talk to her for?" asked Captain Montague. "Spoiling her chances. She's a good-looking article."

"Who's spoiling her chances?" asked the chief officer, cocking his eye sharply. "No harm in a yarn with her. Besides, Miss Brennan's only her professional name. She's married." He looked at his commander again. "That's confidential, as a matter of fact," he added. "She says it's like

being on the stage. People like to think a nurse is single."

And old Mr. Probin, powerful in state legislatures and national utilities, also suffering occasionally great pain, would look at his nurse sometimes in the night watches and tell her she had a hell of a life for a pretty girl.

"You ought to be married," he would say. "Some chap like that young fellow who was here the other day, talking about the war. Just the husband for you—for anybody. Always away." He chuckled.

"Mr. Probin," said Ruth, "you must be a mind reader."

"Think it's a good idea?" said Mr. Probin.

"Of course. Here, take this. But you see Mr. Beckett, the chief officer, is married."

"Pity," said Mr. Probin, sinking back. "She's probably a sap."

"He doesn't think so," said Ruth, and lowered the light again.

"All the same, you're a good nurse and you ought to have a better time."

"I'm having a perfectly wonderful time," she said, and smiled. And he smiled back and felt, somehow, better.

V

Sometimes in the apartment—two small rooms and bath—which Ruth had rented furnished near the elevated, she would look at Philip when he wasn't aware of it, and wonder. She would see him sitting by the fire escape, the lights of a passing train flickering across his dark keen face, smoking and waiting for the racket to cease. Then he would tell her something more about the *Pamplona*.

She had, nowadays, plenty of time to wonder. The *Pamplona's* voyages took Philip away from her nearly two months at a time, and he was in port ten days at most.

Philip had shaken his head slowly when she had said there was nothing in the world to prevent her going on working a while. Later, perhaps, he muttered, if she felt she must. "I like to feel you're here," he said. But these prolonged separations from him, continued through the remainder of her life, would never prove satisfactory. She hadn't figured on them during that first voyage together; but of course that had been a marvellous dream, a sample of heaven, with moments of supreme ecstasy in places like Monaco, and Posillipo, and the moon rising among the columns of the Parthenon over Mount Hymettus. Now that was over; she had an apartment and she tried to invest her life with something of the sober, humdrum serenity of the other married women she saw around her, whom she met in the delicatessen and with whom she went to the movies when Philip was at sea. It was not that she did not like it. She did like it to a certain extent; but was it to go on forever? Marriage, and certainly marriage after she had met Philip on that day when she yielded to a sentimental desire to see a ship, was for her not merely the security of "a meal ticket," but a partnership, a gravely rapturous discovery of life together. Philip's character fascinated her. She wanted to study it, to savour the essential sharp quality of his comments upon his job, his ship, his passengers. She wanted him. Only when it came to his commander did Philip dry up. And yet, if there was one thing in the world Ruth was certain about, it was that Philip and Captain Montague did not hit it off. There was something she could not fathom in the unspoken antagonism and criticism she divined in her husband. She put it to him in her direct way.

"You don't like him; you think he's got something against you," she said one night before sailing.

Philip crossed his feet as they rested on what Ruth

called an occasional table, by the window. He looked at her with a full, candid stare which she loved.

"Not at all," he replied. "You're off the track. Why, he was with my old man in the Company."

"But didn't you say the positions were reversed?" she insisted.

"He was mate with my old man," admitted Philip. "What of it?"

She didn't reply. Indeed, what of it? was the answer she might expect from a man. He looked at her in inquiry.

"Can't you see?" she said. "He knows you have your father's qualities."

Had he? Philip often wondered about it himself. At times he had told Ruth he hoped not! He had objected strongly to her framing his war-time commission and hanging it up in the apartment. He remembered the presentation addresses and silver-mounted binoculars under a glass case. But he knew Ruth would feel hurt if he pretended he was ashamed of his father, who had never lost a ship, never had a grounding or a collision, who had done what so few of his profession do in times of peace—left a remembered name.

"You mean you think this Old Man hasn't?"

"He looked to me as if he wasn't so sure of himself," she said. "Only an impression, of course."

"Well, I'm glad you realize that," he retorted. "You had a fat chance of diagnosing the commander from that suite you lived in with your old Mr. Probin."

"I guess my old Mr. Probin wasn't so bad," smiled Ruth. "He gave me a perfectly grand rig-out, as well as that fitted suitcase for you. So you'd be fixed for leaving me, he said. What did the captain give you, I'd like to know?"

"Only a day off, so I could marry you," confessed

Philip, dropping his feet to the floor. He took Ruth by the shoulders and gave her a light hug. "So don't criticize him."

"I don't want to. But I know well enough he's making you feel uncomfortable. I haven't watched men's faces for nothing. You have something on your mind."

"Think so?"

"I certainly do. And you ought to confide in the wife of your bosom. Eventually, why not now? Because if he's going to pick on my husband——"

"Threatened men live long," Philip said, giving her one of his unheralded kisses. "But I don't intend to keep anything from you."

"I knew I was right," she said, and she added: "You know, if you want to quit I shall be all right."

"I might ask for a transfer," he said, "but that would mean a home ship—Liverpool—Mediterranean—out East. You wouldn't like Liverpool after New York, Ruth."

She looked at him shrewdly.

"You mean you wouldn't," she said, smiling.

"That's right, I wouldn't" he agreed calmly. "Now I've got to go down to the ship for a few hours. I'll be back as soon as I can. They will put coal in the 'tween deck bunkers at midnight. I must see the doors are all closed."

When he was at the door he suddenly found her close to him.

"You won't be mad?" she said. "I want to tell you something."

"What?" he asked.

"I don't want to stay here alone every voyage."

"But what else can we do?" he said, looking at her in a deep perplexity. "I can send you to pay a visit to my mother . . ." She shook her head.

"I wasn't thinking of that," she replied. "I couldn't do that until you came too. I meant, why couldn't I have a position on the ship, like Mrs. Eriksen?"

"She's a widow," he remarked, and then suddenly, "a stewardess? Ruth!"

"A nurse!" she retorted, smiling. "And nobody knows, if that is what you're thinking about. Philip, I must!"

"All right for a widow," he said vaguely and without conviction.

"Well, what am I while you're away? What's any sailor's wife?"

She took him shrewdly with the arguments he could least demolish. She could have told him that stewardesses never had the things to do which were all in the day's work for a nurse; but she had no desire to make him angry and order her to give up both callings.

"Well," he said, and as he opened the door again he added, "it's your happiness I'm thinking of, kid."

While he was away Ruth went to a movie and as the picture flickered and syncopated before her eyes she wondered whether Philip quite understood her passionate comprehension of the strain he was living under during the voyages. What she did not fully perceive was his attitude towards his job. To her modern American mind, accustomed to men moving easily about immense territories and making endless changes of occupation, it was inconceivable that a man should regard losing a certain job as something like having a limb amputated. The wildest stretch of fancy Philip could attain was to ask for a transfer! That, thought Ruth, was the English of it. She smiled in the darkness, loving him for his fidelity to an ideal.

She sat by the window in the apartment waiting for him and listening to the couple next door. They were not mar-

ried, and Ruth wondered what held the man in spite of the life she led him. Love, no doubt. She was a pretty little spitfire. Ruth heard her upbraiding him. He was a waiter in a restaurant, "a head waiter with no head," his girl called him, in fury, at times. Ruth heard her now, screaming that she would fix him if he didn't give her more money. For a coat. She wanted a summer fur coat. Ruth heard hoarse roars and rumbles, as though a heavy dumb animal were in pain, and the slam of the door as he went out. And immediately she heard Philip's key in her own door.

"Did you see to the bunkers?" she asked quickly. He gave her a grave look of love and shook his head.

"I had to take the carpenter's word," he said. "The coal was going in. There was no time. What's up?" he nodded towards the next apartment.

"They've been having a spat," she told him when he spoke of the miserable man with agonized eyes on the stair. "They fight all the time, Philip. It's a crime how she gets away with it. Serve her right if he quit."

"That's what he's going to do," said Philip without feeling the matter very much. It was next morning Ruth remembered those words, as she was getting ready to go down to the ship. A pretty mean-faced little creature, her showy shingle falling over one eye as she blubbered on Ruth's bed, let Ruth read a crumpled pencilled note from Jake, which said that he was through and had gone away, "Where you cannot find me." And might God forgive her, the note ended. There were harsh squeals and jerking knees which gave Ruth a problem for awhile as a nurse. Soon she had her quiet. But she marvelled at the poor thing's feeble equipment for life with a man, and at the poverty of her imagination, which had allowed the inevitable to explode like a bomb in her empty brain. Having snared a

man, she knew nothing about keeping him. They had put to sea in a leaky craft, and neither of them knew any seamanship. Now they were on a lee shore.

But as she looked at her husband when he came in she was not thinking very much about her neighbours. She saw in Philip's face that he had news, and she waited. Presently he said:

"You said something about Mrs. Eriksen. She's leaving to get married. Her third, the second steward tells me."

Ruth laughed.

"There you are," she said. "Didn't I tell you?"

"The second steward asked me if I knew where you were," Philip went on.

"Mr. Formby? Did he? I can tell you how that happened. We were talking once, and Mrs. Eriksen was saying she hadn't any intention of ploughing the ocean all her life, and I said I'd take her job any time she wanted to quit, and Mr. Formby said, 'Well, Miss Brennan, any time you really want a job, just let the office know. There's always a vacancy for young ladies like you.' What did you say?"

"I said I would let you know and send you down. Ruth, are you sure you'll like it? It isn't the same as Mr. Probin."

"I hope it isn't in some respects," she told him calmly. "Philip, I'm glad."

"Now you can keep an eye on me," he said. "As a matter of fact, I'm—it may be my last trip in the *Pamplona*. And if they send me to a ship running out East you would have to come to England."

"That's all right with me. Whither thou goest I will go. . . ."

He held her for a brief moment once more, and used a word common in his boyhood:

"Aye, lass!" he said.

Young Beckett, Captain Montague decided, would probably ask for a transfer next trip. Things had been moving that way for some time, he could see. He was feeling good as he sat in his cabin in the soft benignity of a May night. At first there had been a few incidents of a disagreeable character. Young Beckett had spoken his mind about the coal going into 'tween-deck bunkers before he had seen for himself that the side doors and underwater connections were all right. He had had old Chips up on the carpet. "Tell the captain yourself." And old Chips, rugged old Norseman that he was, had flared up at the lack of confidence. "Ay ban fed oop wit' dis chiff mate," and "Yah, everyt'ing all O. K., Captain."

"You're riding him," Captain Montague had said severely. Young Beckett had said succinctly that he was riding nobody, that Chips was riding for a fall. He couldn't allow a carpenter to take so much on himself. There had been repair work done in the bunkers, and it was the mate's duty to see to it all was right.

"He's been giving me satisfaction for years," Captain Montague had remarked.

Young Beckett replied that such might be the case, but he had no intention of letting a petty officer tell him how to be chief officer. He would rather get out.

And then, as the ship was ready for sailing, old Chips had dragged his immense wooden chest ashore, and followed it, in a rage, with his sea bag over his shoulder. He had quit. He wouldn't sail with "dat chiff mate." He would go ashore and get married.

They had had to get the second carpenter off the *Aramaya*. And in the ensuing discussion young Beckett had remarked, rather white round the nostrils, "Well, if you feel that way about it, of course . . ." and Captain

Montague had wagged a warning forefinger at him.

"I suppose the fact is," he had said, "you've married money and you feel a bit independent. But let me tell you a job is a job, and a job in this employ is not so dusty."

Young Beckett had given a jump at that, but he hadn't answered, so it was probably true. Captain Montague knew of American women, middle-aged and wealthy, who took fancies to young fellows. Which would account for a young fellow getting chummy with that good-looking nurse right after the wedding. . . . There was little doubt young Beckett would not want to remain after what had passed. If he had had any intention of taking his commander into his confidence he would have answered that allusion to his marriage. He could have bridged the narrow but fathomless gap which had existed between them since their first encounter. Well, Captain Montague was used to putting his officers in their places. There would be a change, that was all. Captain Montague looked up, to see the chief engineer in the doorway.

When he had digested the information his visitor brought him he looked at the water level in a goldfish bowl on a table by his bedroom door. The table had been specially fitted by old Chips with a spirit level, so that it was perfectly true. The water in the bowl was very slightly askew.

"I thought you were shifting your fresh-water ballast," he said.

"I am, but she's listed the other way," said the chief engineer. "The chief mate's turned in, so I thought I'd let you know."

"Well, it's only a couple of degrees."

"Three degrees," said the chief. "I fancy myself you've some cargo on that side holding her over. She may have had a slack tank the night they loaded the main hold. So long as you know about it . . ."

He went out and down to his machinery. Captain Montague stepped onto the bridge. At that great height, shrouded in a tremulous gloom, the ship was but the vague nucleus of a broad diverging spear head of snowy foam, which melted with a far-off hissing into the darkness. Around the horizon that darkness seemed to have risen into the sky, engulfing the stars. Even at the zenith they shone mistily, without the clear sparkle of a high glass, among opaque masses of clouds.

It had dropped, Captain Montague found on looking at the chart-room barometer. The weather report, which came along as he stood looking at the chart, confirmed the reading. He spread it flat on the chronometer case and adjusted his glasses:

TO ALL SHIPS
VICINITY OF BERMUDA

> Southeast storm centered north of Bermuda shifting to northwest gale to-night.

He left word to be called "if it gets thick," but before he lay down he descended to the promenade deck, where coloured lights and a victrola, a moving picture and the orchestra, amused a crowd of people in evening dress behind screens of stout canvas draped with many flags. Captain Montague smiled as he passed among them, making his way to one of the suites, where a group of his powerful acquaintances were playing cards. One of them had suggested a position in his European office for the captain. It was bound to come in time, Captain Montague had often reflected. Bound to come! Better than marrying money!

He stood and watched the game for a few moments, serene and imposing, smiling a little at the pastimes of the great, luxuriating in their friendly deference, waiving

tolerantly the drink pressed upon him. He was not a drinker at any time. He was mildly exhilarated by the approach of a dignified retirement. And soon he left them to return to his cabin, where the water in the goldfish bowl leaned a little to the starboard edge.

Philip, suddenly broad awake to a turmoil of wind in his cabin, stepped out of his bed place and rolled unexpectedly across the linoleum. He switched on the light by the door and stared at the oilskins hanging askew and trembling on the hook. His wrist watch showed him it was three o'clock. He was to be called at quarter of four. He closed the windows and began to dress rapidly. The wind and the motion of the ship did not blind him to the fact that she was listed heavily to starboard.

On the bridge, in the darkness, he saw Captain Montague and the second officer holding to stanchions. He made his presence known, and the captain turned a broad blanched face towards him. They staggered to the chart room, and when the door was closed stood looking at the blueprint of the *Pamplona's* ballast system on the wall.

"What's putting her over?" said Captain Montague. "The chief says his bilges are dry and his tanks full. Eh? What's . . . eh?" He stared at the plan.

"I'll get the carpenter and see what's in the wells," said Philip. "She had nothing to speak of at dinner time."

"She hadn't any list at dinner time," said the captain, calling after him as he went out.

That might have been true, but she had one now, he thought, looking at the inclinometer. Outside the weather cloth of the bridge rail cracked like a whip in the wind. The slope of the deck was to him like the descent to Avernus. Beneath the habitude of years he felt the old terror besetting him, of a ship turning over. He stood holding the

edge of the chart table as she lay to starboard, pausing with apathy, as though the problem of coming up again had yet to be solved in that dreadful darkness; rising reluctant at last with loud rackings of gear on deck and the roar of water foaming over hatches, to ease his heart a little and tempt him to believe that she was not so bad.

Up there, alone, he waited. In that dead hour, in a world of wind and rushing water, the steepness of the deck outside took on a sinister significance. It would be a good thing, he found himself saying, if he could get this list out of her before daylight, so as not to alarm the passengers. He was aware of the almost magical speed with which rumours fled through a ship when some unusual thing happened. Stewards talked importantly in the alleyways to men and women who knew nothing of ships. The glimpses of men hurrying would alarm these people if things got too bad. Of course they trusted him. At the last they all trusted him. And now this accumulation of faith weighed like lead upon his heart as he stood waiting for his chief officer to come back.

It was not young Beckett but the chief engineer who materialized out of the darkness of the bridge. Captain Montague opened the door to his room leading from the chart house. It slipped from his hand, and as it swung open with a crash the two of them stumbled against the captain's desk, clasping each other's shoulders as though engaged in some facetious gambols in the darkness. When the light was switched on and the door closed he looked at the engineer, a lean man with high cheek bones and an ecclesiastical air deriving from a circular bald spot and his clerical-looking close-buttoned patrol jacket. He lit a cigarette and puffed hard several times.

"Where's the mate?" he burst out suddenly. "Cap'en, where's the water coming from? I get it down to the fire-

room plates and by God it keeps coming up on me! It's not in our limbers. It's coming through the bulkhead."

"You mean—you've got no water down below?" said Captain Montague.

"Not to put her over like this," said the engineer. He sat with his arms spread like gray ropes on either side of him, his lean belligerent head thrown back, his prominent eyes staring at his commander.

"But you're keeping it under . . .?"

"I'm keeping it under but I'm not getting her straight," the chief shot out. He turned suddenly to grasp the edge of a bookcase as the *Pamplona*, recovering from a deeper lunge, was struck by an enormous sea. The shock was so extraordinary that she seemed to have collided with something solid, like a waterlogged derelict or a floating island.

"Holy Jesus!" muttered the engineer. He sprang up. "Tell me what you want done and I'll do it. She's making water all right. Here's the mate."

Captain Montague, shocked by that last terrific assault of the elements, looked steadily at the young man in oilskins who took the place of the engineer at the door.

"What have you found?" he asked.

"There's water in the bilges, but nothing to worry about," said Philip. His oilskin shone like amber. He allowed his glance to fall on the presentation vase and then upon his commander's face.

"Nothing to worry about! What's your idea of something to worry about?" asked the captain.

"I mean the water's in the 'tween deck," said Philip in a hard, distinct tone. "And it's in the coal too, in the cross bunker."

"And the pumps can't reach it. That's what you mean, I suppose. You sure your soundings are correct?"

"Just about that."

Philip stood leaning against the door jamb, his fist against his cheek, as though going over all he had seen down below.

"You'd better go down and see for yourself what water there is. The chief says he is keeping it under."

"Nobody would notice it up here," said Philip, holding to the door as he turned to go out.

Left alone once more, Captain Montague went out on the bridge. The figure of the second officer was dimly visible in the exact centre of the weather cloth. He did not move as the captain stood still beside him. He seemed to be in a trance amid the roaring of the elements. His very immobility was more alarming than a towering rage. It was as though, in the mountainous seas that gleamed beyond the ship's bows, he saw the riddle of the universe being explained and dared not stir. Even when the captain spoke to him he did not look round, but only inclined his ear.

"Sir!" he shouted.

"I say I'm going to send an S O S."

"Yes, sir!"

"We can cancel it, later."

There was no answer to this. The second officer, who had nothing to do with the hull of the ship, kept his eyes on the seas ahead. Captain Montague went to the chart room and spoke to the engine room on the phone. The answer came.

"Slow down? She's slowed now! I can't keep steam for all these pumps with one boiler half under water. Eh? Yes, if I stop the pumps she gains on me. Eh? What's that? Yes, but you chaps will have to stop it coming in! I can't pump the Atlantic out, can I? Eh? Yes. . . ."

The captain hung up and took his way to his room. The

chief said he could keep her afloat. He had said it abruptly, as though out of patience with a man who could entertain such thoughts. Now, as he put out his hand to call up the wireless cabin, Captain Montague hesitated. It would soon be daylight. He had never longed for it with such intensity. He was suddenly very tired. The physical strain of keeping his feet with such a list and such a motion was hard upon a man of his age. He sat down on the bed. He decided to wait a little. He had never sent out a call for help. If the weather eased, he could . . .

The chief officer was struggling with the door, trying to enter. Captain Montague saw, in that grave set face under the twisted cap, the expression he had seen long ago, in the Mediterranean, on another face. The face of dashing Freddie Beckett, the star commander of the old Afro-Iberian Mail, as he glanced at his chief officer. Captain Beckett, about to relinquish suddenly a career of glory at the head of his profession, and to leave his wife without a penny, had been sardonic and skeptical. He had been, to the very last, undefeated by the hazards of the sea.

Captain Montague looked his chief officer in the eyes.

"Is he keeping it under?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," said Philip. "He's keeping it under all right, but he won't be able to keep steam unless we get her straight. No man can fire a boiler the way she is. His steam is away down."

"Where do you think she's making water?" asked the captain.

Philip braced himself and tried to make out what that shining globe might be which he saw against the bulkhead under the captain's gramophone. Surely his commander wasn't a devotee of crystal gazing! With a grimace he remembered. It was a goldfish bowl, on its side. No doubt

the fish were down there too. They were now out of their element. Philip did not want to answer the Captain's question. He was afraid of the indictment that would creep into his voice. Thinking of Ruth, sleeping soundly in her cabin, loving him and longing for him, he wanted to cry out against destiny. He wanted to ask why he couldn't have seen what would happen if he did not attend to everything himself. He said:

"Oh, in the 'tween deck, of course. And I don't think he can get that water out of her in this weather."

"I have decided not to send a call just yet," said the captain.

Philip thought, "But he had been on the point of sending a call." Aloud he said that the passengers would be frightened.

"See what you can do down there," said the captain. His face was drawn, with dry lips. Heavy moisture hung on his temples as he rose slowly to go out on the bridge. The chief officer looked at him and moistened him own lips.

"Hadn't you better send a call?" he said.

"I have my reputation to think of," said the captain.

"I have more than that to think of," said Philip, suddenly raising his voice.

"Have you?" said Captain Montague, staring at him. He was on the point of speaking again when suddenly the outer door swung open and a man in a raincoat and pajamas, his gray hair in disorder above fierce eyes, thrust his body into the opening. It was as though Philip's words had evoked, out of the chaos and darkness of the bridge deck, the figure of a frightened passenger. Philip watched him clutch at the settee and sink upon it, his eyes fixed upon the captain.

"You shouldn't come up here now, Mr. Manly," said the captain in a gentle voice. The words roused Mr. Manly

to a strange medley of protesting phrases. He gabbled. He crouched before the two silent men and talked of his duty, of their duty, of his wife and daughter, who were worrying him to do something. He had come—he put it to Captain Montague—could a man do less?—The ship was safe, he supposed—but they had had to ask for another cabin—the water on the floor . . .

He clasped his fingers over his mouth and turned himself toward the door, as though he could no longer endure the contemplation of their inaction. He muttered, "I thought it my duty to come to you. Others requested me, I may say . . ."

"That's quite all right, Mr. Manly," said the captain in a loud, unnatural voice, "but you see for yourself we are doing all we can for you. The chief officer is attending to it, Mr. Manly."

When he was gone Philip said:

"This list will cause trouble with them. You'd better send a call."

"Try and get her straight," said the captain. "We don't want to send out calls if you can get her straight."

"No," said Philip. "I don't suppose we do. But—" he turned to go out again—"she isn't getting any straighter. Will you keep the bridge, sir?"

"Yes, and for God's sake do something."

"Ah!" said Philip to himself as he skimmed down the ladder to the promenade deck. "And what, for instance?"

It was a sunrise, seen through rain gusts and dark clouds above racing mountainous seas, of which those who beheld it have no memory. None of the survivors of the *Pamplona* could have recalled the distant orange smudge that, for a moment, was the dawn. What they did remember was the

igure in a torn yellow oiled-silk coat, telling them what to lo. They saw him unleashing boats, adjusting life belts about children, holding the waving arms of declamatory passengers, conferring with others, vanishing into the wireless house, where an operator worked ceaselessly on he ether. They saw him descend to the depths with quick agile leaps, threading his way through dank, dark alleyways to forgotten cabins, hurrying the occupants along, carrying baggage which he jettisoned and for which he substituted blankets and life belts. They saw him come up once with a woman with fair hair, who wore a uniform, and o her he gave a heavy blue overcoat of his own with the houlder straps of his rank, and they saw him put his arms round her and give her a hurried kiss. The engines were topped and the lights were out; but the passengers saw him with a long flashlight move to and fro mustering the stewards and seamen to their posts. The flashlight was like a brilliant sceptre in his hand. They saw him grasp a broken man in waiter's uniform by the shoulder and fix his life belt for him while he laughed to himself. "Wish you had your shore job again, eh?" he said. "She'll be waiting for you, you know! No peace anywhere, is there?" And clapped him again on the shoulder.

And sometimes, as they waited and clung to each other, they saw him go upon the bridge, where the commander stood alone by the weather cloth. Some of them wanted to go up there too and vent their fury upon the man who was, they believed, responsible. They did not go. They were aware of the young man's power to inspire them with confidence once more. The captain's place was up there, of course. What did they expect him to do, anyway? They lit fresh cigarettes away from the wind and huddled against the structures on the boat deck, waiting for the relief which

the young man had said was coming, coming! Once they saw a man they did not know, a long lank person with a circular white tonsure on his black poll and a smeared desperate face, run up the ladder to the bridge. Slowly the day lightened.

After that they did not see anything beyond themselves. They heard orders and flung frantically towards the boats that swung out beyond their reach and then came in with ruthless crushing suddenness. They fell over men who had dropped to their knees in prayer. They heard the whistle on the funnel give hoarse meaningless hoots that died away. They heard steam roaring from pipes, and firemen, blackened and haggard, rushed in among them uttering strange cries as though they had lost their senses. They sat in boats and clung to one another as the sea swung up to meet them. They sat with closed eyes waiting for death. But Philip did not wait. He ran to meet it everywhere and to defeat it. He saw with professional clarity the chances he had and ignored their slenderness. He knew that not only did all these people depend upon him, but that the commander, invisible above them and waiting for the first sign of the coming rescue, was depending upon him too. He saw himself as the only one who would understand why the captain remained up there. It was his place. The mere fact that he was there gave Philip the authority to command in the midst of men appalled by the sloping decks and ravening seas. As he set the junior officers rigging life lines to the boats he ran up to the bridge once more.

Captain Montague stood by the telegraph, binoculars to his eyes, scanning the horizon. In his fingers was crushed the latest message he had received. The master of the *Candelaria* signalled *I am coming to your assistance.* He was about forty miles away, and he had twenty-one knots.

"I am putting them in the boats, sir," said Philip.

"They're safer here so long as she floats," muttered Captain Montague.

"Yes, so long . . . Have you any orders?"

"He ought to be here soon," said the captain absently. "What did you say? Orders? Take care of yourself, Beckett. Take command of the boats."

"Sir!" Philip shook the thick arm in the heavy overcoat. "Sir! You are coming, aren't you? I can't leave you here!"

"You asked for orders, didn't you? I think she will float yet awhile. She would have gone before. . . . You go on now. You have your orders. You will find me here."

"I'll come back in a minute," cried Philip, like a schoolboy sent on an errand. He slid down the canting rail and stumbled along the boat deck as the *Pamplona* gave a great lurch and her well decks roared with boarding seas. She shook with tremendous blows of heavy cargo sliding over iron floors and colliding against frames. She lay over deeply so that men climbing into boats were left clinging and without foothold, and she did not recover.

Philip saw her for that instant as she lay over and felt beneath his feet the tremors of her ending. He stood for a moment motionless, and looking down he saw his wife sitting in one of the lifeboats, her arms round a woman who had her face raised to the sky in a coma of agony. He saw Ruth holding her like a child, and on his wife's face Philip saw the grave, unterrified expression he knew and loved. He stood motionless for that moment, as men lowered madly, and then he turned toward the bridge. He saw an arm waved to him, a gesture of command and of farewell. It seemed to him afterwards, when he looked back, that he had possessed at that moment an extraordinary clearness of vision and understanding. He saw his life with Ruth continuing through the years under the benediction of that arm. He saw himself inspired by it and consecrated to the

terrible burden of command. And he comprehended, as he went down to his business in those great waters, the mystery of human existence, which lives like a flame in the darkness of the universe, whose core is courage and high steadfastness in the hour of irrevocable defeat.

THE ARMOIRE

IT USED to be said by the Company's prize cynic, Purser Jaques of the *Aramaya*, that Captain Musker got and kept the *Biskra* because he and his ship were so much alike. The *Biskra* was middle-aged, but she did not look it. She was peculiar in some of her habits. She ran down smaller craft that couldn't see her coming in thick weather. She had a motion of her own, smooth yet with a final jerk just at the end of the roll that sent everything on the tables flying. She made women sick and sorry if the weather was against her. In fine weather she was so pleasant that passengers forgot they were at sea. And finally, she had a number of undetected defects in her construction.

Of course Jaques had sailed with Musker and was no friend of his. No purser who had sailed with Musker was his friend, even supposing that pursers have friends—which is denied by many executive and commanding officers on ships. It may be, therefore, that Jaques pushed the cynical comparison a little too far. Captain Musker took care of the *Biskra;* and the *Biskra*, running pretty full at the time, was taking care of Captain Musker. As Musker's chief engineer had remarked to the superintendent, when asked how he got on with the captain: "I don't get on with him. I keep out of his way. I don't like him. I am not hired to fall in love with skippers. But if I was an owner that frozen-faced conundrum up there on the bridge is the man I would put in charge of my ship."

You see how difficult is the pursuit of truth among those familiar with the facts. Captain Musker was not a frozen-faced conundrum. He had severe features, resembling

those of clever and sensual ecclesiastics in old pictures. He did not smile very much, it must be admitted. He had a habit of letting the other man talk himself out—and then maintaining an unembarrassed silence. This was the peculiarity which led the chief, who was full of forceful language himself, to call the Old Man a conundrum. He might as well have called him a hypocrite because he read prayers in a skeptical tone of voice, as though he were not bigoted about it, in the saloon on Sundays. If the chief was not hired to fall in love with the skipper, Captain Musker was aware of no instructions to the effect that he reveal his inmost thoughts to anybody.

As for Captain Musker's attitude toward women, that requires a certain amount of detailed description. Indeed, this attitude of Captain Musker, and the predicament in which it landed him, is the story. He was far from illiterate, but he was one of the most unliterary of men. Yet even he, looking back over the events when he was once more at sea, was wont to mutter (to himself) that it would make a story. He didn't even mutter about it to others!

Far from illiterate! Captain Musker was typical of a certain class of shipmaster, in that he had a lot of unexpected and unexpurgated opinions and experience of life. Although the chief would have denied it, having no information on the subject, Captain Musker was anything but inarticulate, either. He even knew enough French to be rude in that language. In those now far distant days, when he was a bullied and muted second mate of an ancient iron sailing ship out of London, with a Welsh skipper, a Scotch mate, a Belgian boatswain, and a crowd of Danes, Norwegians, Swedes, Dutchmen, Greeks, and Maltese, not one of whom was a sailor, Captain Musker had read a great number of books. He had a memory of extraordinary retentiveness, as pursers and chief engineers knew to their

cost. Phrases and words remained in his memory forever. And he had a remarkable sense of hearing. He had once taken the *Biskra* into Southampton in a fog, by hearing alone, but that has nothing to do with the present story. He had a remarkable sense of hearing when conversing with people. He was aware of the finest shades of enunciation and accent. He classified people in his mind by the sounds of their voices and the way they pronounced some trivial phrase. He had a perfectly maddening trick of repeating that phrase to them, copying their manner and exaggerating it, by a mere fraction of a tone, into a caricature.

On the other hand, Captain Musker apparently had only the vaguest notion of what people looked like. Not that he was blind, by a long shot, but it was frequently remarked by passengers that he seemed to recall their faces, even an hour or so after conversing with them, with difficulty. He would greet them courteously but without allusion to bygone pleasantries. By this method Captain Musker remained on amicable terms with his patrons, yet he rendered them quite incapable of presuming upon his good nature. He could pass people without a word, as though they were a part of the *Biskra's* top hamper. Anyone who thought he, or she, was getting past the captain's outer defenses, was speedily disillusioned.

To the uninitiated these characteristics made him interesting without any assignable reason. He made them wonder what there was in him, anyway. When the voyage ended, they recalled him with respect and approval and then forgot him. The *Biskra* filled up again with Americans eager to see the Mediterranean, and once more Captain Musker played his careful, skillful, and enigmatic game. One might almost have suspected him of looking for someone.

He was. Captain Musker was an emotional buccaneer. He was one of those sharply intelligent and vital men whose profession as seaman, and destiny as husband and father, had neither satisfied nor disciplined his heart. He had never betrayed his secret to a living soul; but the fact remained that he was bored by the triviality of his existence. Even during the heavy responsibility of bringing the *Biskra* into New York through the infuriating ice and fogs of the winter months, the knowledge that he would be held even for the foolish negligence of others, if he had a smash, was inadequate to occupy his mind to the exclusion of romantic and villainous desires. Captain Musker had not shirked his duties in this life. His wife, a pale, worn, close-lipped Lancashire woman, received two thirds of his pay each month from the owners in Liverpool, and she was raising her five children with exemplary North Country austerity and rectitude. Anything more wildly contrasting with Captain Musker's life of official splendour as commander of the *Biskra*, a twelve-thousand-ton pleasure ship, than the narrow house at Sefton Park, which is to Liverpool what Yonkers is to New York, could not be imagined. But Captain Musker was not often able to make this comparison. The *Biskra* went to Southampton on the rare occasions on which she docked in Great Britain. Most of the time her home port was New York. This was not distasteful to Captain Musker. He simply could not endure the atmosphere of Sefton Park. He had no intention of abandoning his wife and family in the ordinary sense of the word, but spiritually he had cast them off long ago. It was, to his secret soul, a shocking thing that he should be so shackled, and he had broken the shackles. He roamed the oceans unencumbered by the conventional inhibitions of respectability. His wife had never been on a sea voyage, and she

was not only unaware of her husband's way of life—she could not even imagine it. The infidelity of sailormen was, to her, something abstract and strange. She never associated her husband with such divagations. And in a general way Mrs. Musker showed sense. Captain Musker had no intention of quitting domestic life to live the shabby existence of the average jack-ashore prowler. Far from it.

He was looking for something better and finer, you may say. What did he seek? Because it was a thing more than a person. To describe it more closely still, it was an embodied abstraction he sought. There were qualities about some women which stimulated his imagination and gave him fugitive glimpses of the fundamental principles of human happiness. It was not so easy to fill this specification as some lady passengers fancied. Their response to his first, almost imperceptible suggestion that sympathy was the indispensable factor in human friendship, often inspired him with a silent, invisible, but none the less ferocious contempt. If Captain Musker had lived two centuries earlier he would have made them walk the plank. Some, so crude was their conception of what he was driving at, he would probably have hanged at the yardarm.

But modern seamen who voyage out upon the more or less uncharted seas of romantic friendship are generally wrecked; or at any rate, they abandon the voyage and return home overland. Captain Musker was always making mistakes. It was a poor substitute for cutting their throats to cut them on the promenade deck. But he made the more intelligent of them feel acutely that they were not his ideal, after all.

It must not be supposed that these emotional cruises of Captain Musker were lost upon the officers of the *Biskra*. On the contrary, they were well known to them all, through

the steward and purser. Occasionally the officer on the bridge had endeavoured to discover just what Captain Musker was doing in his room. These efforts were disappointing. One inquisitive third mate had once tiptoed into the chart room and was applying his bright blue eye to the keyhole of the captain's cabin, when the door flew open sharply, allowing the young gentleman to fall in an apologetic pose at his commander's feet. Captain Musker did not say a word. He merely handed the third mate a sheet of paper bearing the heading "Night Orders," and in pencil underneath the following words: "Come in whenever you wish, but don't spy on me, or anybody else." The young fellow never forgot the expression of blended astonishment and demoniacal delight on the face of the handsome French actress in extreme Parisian décolleté, seated across the room holding a crème-de-menthe in her jewelled hand, nor her shrill cackling laughter. What he should have remembered in the first place was Captain Musker's acute sense of hearing.

But the purser and the steward had no such illusions, even had they felt like losing their own dignity of office. They were amused at the cool, imperturbable insolence with which Captain Musker bundled semi-important people from his own particular table in the saloon and had interesting women brought over from corner tables where the purser himself or the doctor had stowed them for their own delectation. They were compelled to admire Captain Musker's manner. If he were carrying someone of absolutely first rank, such as the prime minister of Sarmatia or the financial adviser to the Governor of the Chersonese Peninsula, Captain Musker managed, by some occult variation of the ordinary rules of conversation, to make these potentates see how much more desirable it was for them to have a special table, or even to take their meals in

their suites. Old and important ladies, foisted on the captain by the management, were not disturbed. Captain Musker simply dined in his cabin, and the ladies he preferred were usually delighted to accept his invitations.

Indeed, there was no particular reason for Captain Musker going downstairs at all. The owners of the *Biskra* left such points of etiquette entirely to their individual commanders. In their view, if a woman wanted to compromise herself on the high seas, it was no part of their duty or privilege to prevent her. It was possible—and cynical Purser Jaques had once remarked that it seemed certain—that some of them took sea voyages for that express purpose. The Company put complaints down to jealousy, and in this they were generally right.

On the voyage with which this story had to deal there had been an almost unbelievable dearth of what the doctor called "heart interest." It is highly unusual for a ship to leave New York on a cruise to the Mediterranean without carrying a few of the sort of women Captain Musker suspected of possessing that elusive and subtle quality he delighted to discover. American women are extraordinarily sensitive to the appeal of life on board ship. They are also inclined to attribute heroic qualities to the men who command ships. But mere roguishness and bright interest in himself was not precisely what Captain Musker coveted. That sort of thing bored him. So did other men's lady-loves travelling alone, who attempted to achieve spurious flirtations with the captain in order to excite the interest of some attractive vice president of a million-dollar corporation whose wife was keeping to her cabin all the voyage. So did the rangy and athletic provincial women who taught English in distant colleges, making their first voyage to Europe, and who were ready to expire emotionally at the sight of Captain Musker's austere, appraising eyes bent

upon them from beneath his peaked cap trimmed with golden oak leaves.

But nothing else was to be found on this occasion. The captain dined in taciturn dignity surrounded by respectable couples of normal wealth, age, and social importance. He walked the promenade in solitary state, ignoring the expectant eyes of women in the ranked deck chairs. He spent long hours in his room, reading or meditating upon the prospects of something turning up in Marseilles. He was not sanguine. The most likely arrivals were a host of students who had been dissipating in Paris and having an extra week or two in the Louvre.

The new purser of the *Biskra* was not cynical. Indeed, he was inclined to doubt the stories he had heard about Captain Musker in the past. He alluded to the captain's monastic seclusion to the chief steward, who laid a long, cigarette-stained finger to his pink, fleshy nose. The steward's name was Drinkwater; but as he himself remarked at times, a man doesn't select his own name.

"You wait," he told the purser, Mr. Vokes, in a rich port-wine voice. "He's only biding his time. The Old Man's fancy in skirts ain't yours, nor it ain't mine, neither. But I'll say this for him—he goes in for thoroughbreds mostly, and he's damn' particular even about them."

"I haven't the slightest idea what you're talking about," said Vokes in a refined, querulous tone, "and I doubt if you have, either, Drinkwater."

"Oh, all right, all right," mumbled the steward. "You haven't sailed with this Old Man. I have. You didn't see that Eye-talian moving-picture actress in New York, did you? The Signorina Carmelita Something-or-other. She joined us in Naples. Some girl, Mr. Vokes."

"I saw her pictures in the Sunday papers," said Vokes, yawning "What about her? Did he——"

"Not by a jugful!" returned Mr. Drinkwater, nodding solemnly. "She was at his table, and anybody with eyes in his head could see she was balmy about him."

"Why on earth should a woman like that get balmy, as you call it, about the skipper?" demanded Vokes irritably. "I heard the same sort of blah on the *Bizerta*. Marvellous tales of the celebrated Captain Musker! Must have a hypnotic eye!" He raised his voice. Mr. Drinkwater made a gesture of warning.

"He has a damn inconvenient sense of hearing," he muttered, "and don't you forget it. I don't know why," he went on, alluding to the Italian lady. "I'm only telling you. He turned her down, *cold!* You know, he'll take people off. She had a way of saying, '*Oh, si, si!*' meaning 'Yes, yes,' you understand. He'd take her off."

Vokes stared as though he doubted the steward's sanity. Mr. Drinkwater nodded.

"Yes," he insisted. "Took her off, before the other passengers—'*Oh, si, si!*' " Mr. Drinkwater's voice became an astonishing falsetto.

"You mean insulted her?" exclaimed Vokes, who suddenly looked extremely shocked. Like most commonplace men, Vokes could not bear the thought of a pretty woman being treated as though she were an ordinary human creature. He called it chivalry, doubting in his heart whether other men really understood it.

Mr. Drinkwater shook his head, his mouth pursed up, his eyes globular with superior information.

"He has a way with him," he said. "You wait. He's had nobody here to bother him so far this trip, you know."

The purser was not listening. It had come into his head that Captain Musker had been acting in this fashion only the day before. Vokes had been in the Old Man's room with some papers. He had given, as he stood beside Captain

Musker's desk, his own peculiar slight cough behind a bent forefinger. He became rigid with indignation now as he realized what the captain had done. He had taken him off! Had given a slight cough behind a curved forefinger!

Mr. Vokes became aware again of the steward talking. He frowned. His complacency was shattered like a shivered mirror, fresh cracks revealing themselves even as he eagerly scrutinized it. He came abruptly to the inevitable conclusion of the Englishman who has been taken off. Captain Musker was a bounder! A rank outsider!

". . . The chief says we'll be in Marseilles to-morrow evening," concluded Mr. Drinkwater, who had been going on with his narration, unconscious of the purser's thoughts.

Captain Musker did not happen to hear this conversation. Even he could not catch the sound of men's voices through four steel decks and several bulkheads, with the engines turning ninety revolutions per minute. It would have affected him not at all, however. Men received from him adequate justice, no matter how long they remained with him; they got nothing more. Captain Musker, when he wrote a reference for one of his officers, concluding with the conventional declaration of sorrow over the departure, would point it out to the young man with the blunt end of his fountain pen. Nothing more. The departing mate would comprehend perfectly. He would always allude to his late commander with an expressive grimace. He learned in time that Captain Musker had his good points. For instance, he had never sent in "confidential reports" about anybody in his life. He didn't even answer the company's letters asking for them. If they wanted a snooper they could hire one at less than a shipmaster's salary. Mr. Vokes was young and full of his English dignity, and he did not yet understand that power is heady stuff, but a good com-

mander carries it according to his own particular temperament. It had never struck Mr. Vokes in exactly this light—but acting as an unpaid judge of one's superiors is the most unprofitable profession in the world.

The *Biskra* was to remain merely overnight in Marseilles in the Grand Bassin du Lazaret. Mr. Vokes was in his office in the grand entrance hall when the gangway was shot on board and the new passengers, who had been waiting since four o'clock—it was now six-thirty—began to embark. He saw Drinkwater answer the ship's telephone in his office across the hall, and then he forgot everything because he found himself gazing straight into Cora Saverey's eyes, through the shining brass bars of the grille. Mr. Vokes did not so much fall in love with Cora Saverey as to indulge in a head-on collision with that particular kind of grand passion which seems to afflict ship's officers on passenger vessels. He was dimly aware of Drinkwater, the officious fool, coming away from the telephone and walking rapidly to and fro, his hands behind his back, with the smile of a minor prophet, whose predictions have come true, on his flushed and bibulous countenance.

Mr. Drinkwater was hovering in the vicinity for three excellent reasons: First, it was his duty to do so while the passengers were coming on board; second, he wished to speak to Mrs. Saverey about her seat in the saloon; and finally, after the fashion of minor prophets, he was eager to impart his latest confirmation to an unbeliever.

Vokes overlooked this side of the question. To him the upper part of Cora Saverey's fine figure, the dark lustre of her brown eyes, the exquisitely flexile beauty of her mouth, were sufficient to exclude the world beyond. He thought her ruby-red tam-o'-shanter the most vividly suitable and smartly *chic* affair in the world. Vokes was

shaken. He could hardly answer her inquiries as to mail, hour of sailing, baggage, cabin, bath, deck chair, money-changing, library, and games, which every woman deems it her duty to discuss with the purser within five minutes of embarking. He was shaken. Peering at him through the grille, Cora thought lightly of some strange uniformed animal in a marine zoo. She was always nice to men in official positions while travelling. It was good policy. She smiled at Mr. Vokes, and he trembled.

Then he saw Drinkwater beaming and waiting to speak to her the moment she turned away from the grille. He wished Drinkwater would go away and fall down the boiler-room ladder so that he would be temporarily disabled. He wished that the whole business of embarkation could be halted for several hours so that he could continue to look into Cora Saverey's eyes. But apparently as a purser he continued to function during this momentary vertigo. He heard himself speaking, and he saw Cora Saverey smile again and murmur, "Thank you so much," as she turned to fall into the clutches of the unspeakable Drinkwater.

Five minutes later the chief steward came into Mr. Vokes's office and spoke behind his pink, hairy fist.

"Just as I said, Mr. Vokes," he rumbled. "You saw that skirt with the red tam-o'-shanter? Mrs. Saverey? Old Man was looking down from the bridge and spots her. Telephones me, you noticed, perhaps. 'Steward,' says he, 'that lady as has just come aboard, in the red hat. Put her at my table next to me,' he says. Didn't I tell you he would come to life when we got to Marseilles? Nice piece of goods, too, if you ask me. 'And tell the purser,' he says, 'tell the purser to bring the passenger list at once,' he says. It's her he wants to know about, I may as well tell you," added Drinkwater. "Age, nationality, married or single, name

and address. He'll get her telephone number from her himself," he went on with a giggle.

It is only just to state that the steward had no idea, never did have any idea, of the anguish all this was causing Mr. Vokes. Drinkwater did not know what had happened while he was waiting for Mrs. Saverey to be at liberty. As for the purser falling in love, most of them were too hard-boiled to make such an event probable. Drinkwater was merely interested in proving that he had been correct in his diagnosis of Captain Musker's technique.

"I tell you," he murmured, moving off again, "he's a wonder."

It might easily be true, thought Vokes miserably, as he went on with his work. There were other passengers, a dozen of them, besides Mrs. Saverey, and he went on with his work. For five minutes Vokes had soared into the empyrean. All his life he had been selfish, but had regarded it as a compound of virtue and refinement. But for five minutes—the minutes between Cora Saverey's smile and Drinkwater's information—Mr. Vokes had formulated a scheme for getting this ravishing woman at his table, inviting her this evening to dine with him, in one of the places he knew on the Cannebière. In a series of rapid and cinematographic visions he saw himself with her at Bertolini's at Naples, at Shepheard's at Cairo, at Salvarelli's at Tunis. He saw himself on the little balcony of the Royal Danieli at Venice, envied by all the other men in the place, and entering a gondola for a moonlight ride on the canals. Vokes had never had any romance in his life, and he had often pitied himself. He imagined romance was a combination of luck and being an Englishman. He was mistaken. Romance is a matter of temperament and opportunity. The poignant moments of ecstasy passed; the flame went out, and Vokes regarded the smoking residue with dismal

discouragement. Years later Vokes achieved his romance—on another steamer. He was one of those men who marry their romance and never achieve another.

Captain Musker studied the situation. There had been something about the glimpse he had had of that woman as she hastened up the gangway, a glimpse mainly of a red tam-o'-shanter, fine shoulders, and a flicker of silk stockings above gleaming high heels, which inspired him to hope that his season of boredom was at an end. He could not have explained it, but something in the way she came on board led him to believe that she was not only a competent traveller but that she was alone. Quite accidentally he had been leaning on the rail outside his cabin abaft the bridge after "ringing off" to the engine room. He had caught sight of the red tam and the poise of her body as she turned around from speaking to someone on the dock—an official, he was sure—and swung forward up the gangway. It seemed extraordinary that so fugitive an impression could give him so strong a conviction that she was interesting and unencumbered by bothersome preoccupations. He stepped at once into his quarters and called up the chief steward, listening intently for the tone in which that gentleman replied. Oh, yes, the port-wine voice said with husky deference, the lady was now at the purser's office. It would be attended to at once. Quite so.

Captain Musker told himself, as he hung up, that Drinkwater had had a few whiskies already. He could almost smell that rich vinous breath over the wire! Captain Musker was very abstemious himself. He had a notion that liquor rather detracted from the sport to which he was addicted—the search for a congenial feminine personality. One had need of all one's brains to maintain an advantage over women, he believed. And it is true that men, like him, with their senses extraordinarily acute, and endowed with an

undiminished vitality of body and mind, are not attracted by the muggy delights of alcohol.

Nor did he notice anything in the manner of Vokes, who appeared with some papers in due course. He was not thinking of Vokes. He had decided before they left New York that Vokes was well enough, somewhat conceited, and by no means observant. All of this was correct. When Vokes arrived, Captain Musker was having a shave and a change before dinner. He had been up early, passing the Spanish headlands. He ignored Vokes, telling him to leave the stuff on the desk. At seven-thirty, when he judged a woman like this Mrs. Saverey—Cora Huntingdon Saverey, according to the passenger list—would be halfway through her fish, Captain Musker stepped into the elevator and descended to the dining room.

But Cora Saverey was more anxious to meet Captain Musker and make a favourable impression upon him than he was to meet her and exercise his celebrated influence. She always, in her frequent voyages to Europe, had this plan in view, merely as a matter of sound policy. It did not always amount to much, because on the big Western ocean flyers the captain was often invisible to a mere lone Thirty-eighth Street dressmaker.

On this occasion, however, Cora had come to Marseilles from Paris instead of going direct to Cherbourg. She was eager to see the storied lands of the Mediterranean. The tourist agent in Paris had told her she could pick up the *Biskra* at Marseilles—a number of passengers were going overland to Switzerland and Germany—and make the trip. She inquired about baggage. She had a large quantity of baggage, as usual, trunks and trunks of dresses which must go direct, of course; but other trunks, materials, patterns, bric-à-brac for the *atelier*, she wished to take with her. There was also some furniture, antiques, also for the *atelier*.

The agent assured her the *Biskra* had room for a truck-load of baggage, if she wished to pay the freight on it. He had leaned far over the counter to show her the exact location of her room on the *Biskra* as they examined the accommodation chart. He had been quite nice. Men were generally nice to Cora. Her husband was the solitary exception. He did not understand her. It was very difficult for Cora to explain her husband to other men, especially men who fiercely insisted she divorce him and marry them instead. She was thinking of this difficulty—it was strange how much she thought of him—when Captain Musker came to take his seat beside her in the saloon of the *Biskra.*

But if her husband was a puzzle to her, Cora Saverey found Captain Musker even more baffling. She knew she was attractive in her rust-coloured evening gown with a red amber necklace and a carbuncle bracelet on her splendid arm. So attired, her beauty was of the robust, yet not too heavy type, which makes men meditate upon the days when women were carried off amid scenes of slaughter and barbaric ravishment.

But Captain Musker, searching her face in the first glance of grand appraisal, was preoccupied more with the quick intelligence and honest comradeship he detected latent there. This, he felt, was she whom he had imagined so often of late. He plunged at once into conversation in an undertone, and people at neighbouring tables, noting the expression of Cora Saverey's face change from smiling politeness to a sort of bewildered yet intense interest, wondered what he was saying.

They were fated, however, to remain in ignorance. Women never repeated the things Captain Musker told them. As Drinkwater phrased it, he had a way with them. Cora Saverey seemed so utterly engrossed with his words she hardly noticed what she was eating. The others at the

captain's table, a rotund and good-natured couple, addressed remarks to him from time to time and received adequate replies. And the fascinating monologue continued in a low tone, running round the interruptions as a stream runs round the obstructions in its course. Sometimes, restraining her laughter with difficulty, Cora shook her head. Laughing outright, she would nod her vigorous assent. Once she turned her head away from Captain Musker, who continued to talk, and hiding her face in her hand shook with shocked merriment. And Mr. Vokes, who was sitting in full view of this scene, became more convinced than ever of Captain Musker's ungentlemanly behaviour. It stabbed him through and through to think that the captain might even be taking off himself in order to evoke that unseemly laughter in a charming but misguided girl.

It was all the more impressive from a spectator's point of view because Captain Musker's austere features remained unsmiling. The middle-aged and elderly passengers did not approve. They felt certain that to make a woman like Cora Saverey—extremely smart and yet entirely unplaced as yet—enjoy herself at such short notice there must be something improper about the conversation. And naturally they longed to hear it.

But Cora did not enlighten them. As she left the saloon she nodded to a couple of spinsters with whom she had chatted on the way from Paris and went to her cabin smiling, leaving the commander looking into a demitasse. Cora had accepted his invitation to go on shore with him in an hour.

Cora Saverey was a business woman. Her *atelier* in Thirty-eighth Street, where she also had an apartment, was one of those small select enterprises which succeed by means of the oldest and most economical form of advertising in the world—personal recommendation. She had a clientele

that included Forty-second Street vocalists, Park Avenue flappers, handsome ladies with apartments in the Thirties near the Third Avenue L, who were sometimes accompanied by middle-aged Wall Street men; and not-yet-successful motion-picture actresses working in the studios beyond the Fifty-ninth Street bridge. Not a married woman in the lot, Cora used to think, with a smile. It was strange how the waifs and strays of New York's Alsatia seemed to like her, who was devoted to her husband in a most absurd way. Or rather it was strange that she should have developed a vogue for them. She dressed with amazing *chic* herself; but her style was decidedly Parisian, and it came natural to her to be simple yet vivid and smart.

And of course Cora was in continual conflict with the passing fancies of men, who saw in her one of her own customers, one of those maturing and experienced girls, perhaps, who are forever tearing to and fro across the Atlantic, or perhaps a rich man's companion about to be paid off. Cora was neither, but she never made a parade of her real feelings. She had her way to make. Men like these had other women friends—possibly clients. She was clever. And, as already remarked, the officers of the ships on which she travelled were the especial objects of her smiles and pretty speeches. She had never lost anything by it yet.

But as she pondered Captain Musker's recent disclosures regarding himself she was puzzled to know what to make of him. Somehow or other Cora seemed to appeal most to those men who did not believe very strongly in female integrity. Virtuous and ambitious men were intimidated by her air of worldly hauteur when her eyes, the colour of new bronze, rested upon them. They were also restrained by the intense bitterness with which their women folk spoke of her before they knew anything about her. It would not be true to say Cora knew all this. She did not know it as she

knew the customs dues on the materials she imported. She was aware of it as we are aware of some one behind us, as we sense a premonition. She did not, in her thoughts, accuse Captain Musker of being one of these men merely because he had spoken to her about himself with Homeric frankness. This was because Captain Musker, too, was clever. You might almost say he had his way to make as well as she. He had a problem to solve, anyhow.

He was clever. Everything he had told her, while it could be taken as extravagant metaphor and merely expressive of his desire to amuse a passenger, might, after all, be true. It was possible that he had been seeking a soulmate, a woman who could sympathize with his peculiar state of mind. It was possible that she herself had unique qualities for such a rôle, that Fate had brought them together, two minds with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one! It was even possible that he had fallen in love with her the moment he had seen her coming up the gangway. According to what he had told her, the voyage from that moment had become something entirely different. Instead of a dead dreariness of routine, it would now be an adventure, brilliant, scintillant, possibly incandescent—if she were the woman he believed her to be! It was the word "incandescent" which had caused her to turn her head and become convulsed with laughter.

It was ridiculous, of course; yet, as she repaired her make-up in her cabin, she could not help thinking about him. She was not such a fool as not to see that the voyage would be delightful, if not "incandescent," if Captain Musker made her his companion. She decided he was fascinating. And a woman can love one man with an obstinate, all-enduring devotion, and yet think of another man as fascinating, admiring him, and enjoying with a sort of

virginal wickedness the perils of the intimacy. She can do this and keep her head, while the man, so long as he is not the victim of his own emotions, remains in exasperated ignorance of her real feeling for him. If he falls in love the affair becomes a series of duels in which he is likely to receive a mortal wound in his self-esteem.

The first rounds of Cora's duel with Captain Musker took place that evening over the table of a café-restaurant in the Rue Noailles, which is a continuation of the Cannebière. There were buttons on the foils, one might say. She was reluctant to spoil her chances for a charming voyage. He had his pride. Captain Musker was tremendously jealous of his self-esteem, of his judgment, and of his reputation for fastidiousness.

"I have been thinking of what you told me," she said, smiling. "It was awfully interesting."

"And you agree?" he asked, outwardly calm, but more perturbed within than he believed possible. She stared at him for an instant and burst out laughing in his face. He thought: *She is everything I like.*

"Who do you think you are?" she demanded explosively. "The Prince of Wales? No, of course not!" And she laughed again, her eyes on his, accepting a cigarette, enthralling him completely in the snare of her beauty.

And again he said to himself: *Everything I like!*

"No," he said aloud, "but you will."

"You're a fast worker, Captain," she informed him with a glance of generous admiration. "Do you always go for a girl like this?"

"I've never had cause to 'go' for anyone like this, as you call it, before. I don't take orders about speed. Don't you like it?"

"Oh, like it! That's—well, not the point. Don't you get rebuffs?" she inquired cheekily.

"Mind your own business," he growled. "I asked you a question."

She laughed and left her hand on the table. He took it. She gazed at him through the smoke of her cigarette.

"You do like it," he announced coolly. She drew her hand gently back.

"Does it mean so very much to you, Captain?" she asked.

"Why don't you stick to the point?" he insisted.

"I told you it wasn't the point," she flashed back at him.

"Then I was right. You like it! That makes it easier for me to tell you that it means very much indeed to me," he said, frowning.

"And all you told me, about your need of someone with sympathy, was serious?" she asked.

He nodded vigorously. He was repeating to himself, *Everything I like,* but to her he said, with the very faintest tinge of mockery in his tones:

"Tell me about your life as a *moodeeste,* in your *atelier.* Aren't you lonely?"

She looked up at him sharply. She had used those two words, perhaps with a little swank, since she felt so glad to be with English-speaking people again. For an instant she faltered. And then she smiled, her chin in her hand, and reaching for another cigarette she gave him a wistful enigmatic glance from the depths of her bronze-coloured eyes.

"Well, perhaps, at times," she said.

"Why have you never married again?" he asked. There was a dangerous flicker in the eyes gazing at him for a moment.

"I might follow your example and say mind your own business," she remarked slowly, "but I can tell you why. I'm not sure I'd be any better off."

"Yes?" he said, wondering if this were a piece of daring

on her part, offering him an almost unbelievable opening. Suddenly she leaned forward, her elbows on the little iron table, the glass of Cointreau raised to her lips.

"Don't ask too much, Captain," she said gently, "of a poor working girl."

The captain did not reply. But to himself he repeated the glamorous phrase: *Everything I like!*

And a month later, as the *Biskra* started homeward toward Gibraltar and New York, the amphitheatres and cisterns of ancient Carthage away on her port beam, on the flank of Sidi Bou Said, Captain Musker was still of the same mind. She was not only all he had imagined, but more. In the moonlight of the crossings, amid the beauty of Posillipo and Sorrento, during the heat and dust and strangeness of such places as the Holy City and Damascus, in a fast motor car between Cairo and Heliopolis, under the moon again between Athens and Phaleron Bay, the magical way she responded to his mood about abandoning her mystery made him revise, at times, his opinion of women. Here in Tunis she had done it again. He knew very little more about her now than when she came on board at Marseilles. Not that she had been rudely uncommunicative. He had learned the sort of women who patronized her shop, the kind of books and plays she liked, and her fad for antique furniture—for the *atelier*. Here in Tunis she had made him go into strange old places looking for "pieces."

And she had detected, and denounced to his face, that habit of his of taking people off. He had done it more than once to her, and she had put her foot down.

"I won't have it!" she had said to his amazement. He recalled the scene and the bewilderment of the old Spaniard who had the thing for sale.

"What do you want with a great thing like that?" he had asked, amused, as she poked around the dark, dirty

shop. It was a huge wardrobe of Spanish workmanship, of massive Honduras mahogany with handles Cora suspected to be cast silver. There was a coat of arms over the door, and, within, it was as large as a small room. Captain Musker was taken aback by her answer.

"That's what I shall use it for, a room for the models," she said. "It is an *armoire*."

"Oh, I see: it's an *armoire*," he had mocked, and she had turned on him like a flash.

"I won't have you imitating me!" she exclaimed, stamping. "I won't have it!"

He admired this spirit of hers so much! To his own surprise, he had given in at once, and she had become radiant again. She used the word *armoire* several times to test him, however.

"It'll cost you a pretty penny to take that to New York," he had warned her.

But it had not. He had bought it for her, and it was going to New York as his. His *armoire*.

It was time, Captain Musker thought, as the *Biskra* left Cape Bon astern, to decide what he was to do. He could no longer disguise from himself the fact that Cora Saverey had beaten him at his own game. He was in love with her, and she was aware of it. She seemed to have no care for her reputation, yet somehow no one had much to say against her. She was so open in her movements that she disarmed criticism. Moreover, the manifold love affairs going on throughout the *Biskra* were in no way complicated by Cora Saverey. She remained smilingly outside of them all. Captain Musker had her to himself, but she held him off in a way that baffled and intoxicated him. When he used his old and well-tried methods, of exciting the pity which is not so much akin to love as it is the first stage of it, she would listen and then argue earnestly about duty. Captain

Musker did not want to hear about duty. He was an authority on the subject. He had always done his duty. And he had reached that age when men like him feel they have earned a vacation from duty. He went so far as to say that if he were to go home to England and start being attentive to his wife, she would have him put in a sanitarium.

"Have you ever tried it?" asked Cora, making a sly grimace.

What amazed her was the captain's all-engrossing selfishness. He thought about her all the time in a passionate way, yet he never considered her at all. He was gradually becoming the victim of his illusions. He did not believe in her, although he was in love with her. Cora, rather alarmed, perceived this. She was aware of it all the time as the ship drove across the Western ocean. He was convinced it was only a matter of time before she would reward him by revealing herself as "very much like everybody else," as she phrased it to herself. This was a dangerous state of mind for any man. If Mr. Vokes, who was much engrossed with a nice girl from Michigan, had known of it, he would have felt adequately compensated. But he did not know of it. Not even the versatile Drinkwater was aware of it. The more upset Captain Musker became, the more caution he displayed in keeping his affairs secret. And when the ship had left the summer seas behind, and the slow swing and heave of the North Atlantic under scudding clouds with a chill in the air had sent the women below decks, Captain Musker had leisure and solitude to thrash the matter out. It was an ideal opportunity to master himself, but like most men in such circumstances, he did not succeed.

He saw, by the time he reached Sandy Hook, that he was infatuated with her, and only her acceptance could solve the problem. He stubbornly told himself that he would go to any length, now, to win her. It infuriated him, sec-

retly, that she should have reversed the rôles. As a rule, Captain Musker played the part of an Olympian Jove, dispensing the favour of his regard to gratified human females. It was the other way round now.

Cora had her problem too, but it was not Captain Musker. At Gibraltar she had received letters from her manager, a clever girl like herself, reporting the news of the *atelier*, and from her husband. Cora's husband was her trouble. Cyril was always wanting money, but he had revealed no marked ability for earning it. He was an artist and younger than Cora. He was clever in a way, but it did not seem to be a way favoured by the art editors of New York magazines. Often, for long periods, he could not work at all, because he had been gassed during the war. In winter he had to go South. Cora's problem had been to get this husband, whom she loved, in the way of seeing himself as the world saw him—a sponge. It was not easy, because Cyril said he did not care what the world thought.

Cyril wrote to say he was succeeding. He had broken into the advertising game and had a contract. He did not say he wanted to see Cora. There was something funny about Cyril in that respect, as though his mind were clouded over. Of course he loved Cora; but it never occurred to him to make any demonstrations. If she went to Europe on business he never asked her when she was coming back or expressed any longing to be with her. Since the war he had been like this. Cora loved him, naturally. Why shouldn't she? She gave him money. Certainly! That was Cyril, a curly-haired, blue-eyed, extremely nervous and slender young man whose knack of drawing comic puppies and boys with freckled faces was now being utilized by an advertising corporation.

It was an illusion of Cyril's that he was absolutely independent. He was also very proud. He had sometimes

walked out of the East Thirty-eighth Street apartment, his head in the air, because Cora had been "fresh." He always walked in again, after a night spent on the sofa in his attic studio a couple of blocks down the street. To Cora this cloudiness of his mind was a call to lavish infinite patience and care upon him. It might pass. She often thought of the happiness that would be hers when it had passed and he would look comprehendingly into her eyes at last.

But in the meanwhile, although Captain Musker did not perceive just how the problem appeared to Cora, she was often troubled by the craving for a fuller emotional life. Men had told her more than once, richer men than Captain Musker could ever hope to be, that she was wasting her own glorious gifts without possibility of return. She sometimes doubted her own wisdom. If she had been a lazy parasite, living on an assured and luxurious income from dividends and coupons, she might have abandoned her clear and vigorous outlook on life. But she ran a business shrewdly; she was in contact with reality every day except when on board ship. Her mind and heart never grew slack or flabby. She knew that those who give are those who receive most, in the realm of the spirit.

And when the time came to say good-bye, she met Captain Musker up on the boat deck and thanked him for his kindness. She was looking wonderful in a close-fitting dress of black silk she had had made in London, a gleaming sheath for the radiant personality within.

"I am coming up to see you," he said bluntly. "I have your address. I have something to say. Can't say it on the ship."

"Please!" she begged him. "It would be so much better not to. I've had a wonderful time. But, really and truly, there can't be anything else."

"I'm coming," he insisted.

He had the great wardrobe she had bought—for she insisted on offering him a check—her old Spanish *armoire*, sent up to her place; and a day or two later he proceeded to follow it. The words *armoire* and *amour* haunted him. To him Cora was not a New York *modiste* with a rating at the credit agencies. She was the embodiment of all the dream women he had imagined, who had poured out the prodigality of their beauty and fascination before him. She was the spirit of French *chic* and elegance and naughtiness, dainty, desirable, and at length accessible. He could not stay away from her. He had imagined the place where she lived, quietly yet voluptuously furnished—he and she alone. It was beyond his belief that anything so near to his long-cherished ambitions could fail to materialize now. He went up one evening. He could not reach her on the telephone, but gave a message he was coming to take her out to dinner.

"And you never even thought I might have another engagement," she suggested when he stood before her.

"Break it," he said. And he added: "You don't need to be up-stage with me, Cora. After—well, after Cairo and Heliopolis."

"Now, play fair!" she exclaimed angrily.

"All right. But come to dinner."

"I can't," she said. "I've got an engagement."

"Oh, break it!" he repeated. "Can't you?"

"No," she said honestly. "How do you like the *armoire*, Captain? Looks nice with that tapestry, don't you think?" She walked over to where the great cabinet stood, dark against the cream-coloured wall of the room. He strode through the curtains after her, heavily charged with emotion. "I wonder, Captain, you haven't ever taken up col-

lecting something. It's a wonderful relaxation for the mind from business." She was smiling, very sure of herself.

"Collect!" he repeated. "I collect something," he muttered. "I collect fine—do you know what I collect?"

Before she could answer, he had her in his arms and was crushing her face against his mouth. She suddenly became very still. Captain Musker's acute hearing warned him of a tiny sound in the hall, a key turning in the lock. Cora walked away from him, but kept her smiling face toward him.

"Oh," he said. "Somebody else has a key."

"My husband," she said quietly. "I told you. He is coming in to take me to dinner."

Captain Musker looked about him heavily. For the moment the key was turning at the other end of the long hall in the front of the apartment, there was a silence. Then Cora went over to the *armoire* and, turning the heavy silver handle, swung open the door. She made a gesture.

"You are to do this for my sake, Captain. I ask you. It will be all right. Please."

Captain Musker, scarcely aware of his own actions, stepped in, and the door closed upon him.

It was a remarkable experience for the commander of the R. M. S. *Biskra* of the Afro-Iberian Mail. He never forgot it. He found himself in a perfumed darkness, caressed by soft fabrics impregnated with the exquisite odour of *Toujours Fidèle* which Cora had been using all the voyage. It was as though he had been plunged into the very heart of her personality. *Toujours Fidèle!* Had she used that scent to show him that, after all, he was on a wild-goose chase? He pondered for a moment, and then he was startled to hear voices close by him. He could hear perfectly! There was a kiss.

"Cora!" A young voice, eager, triumphant.

"Darling!"

"Cora, are you ready? This evening is on me, you know. I've just been to the office. They're immensely pleased with my drawings. They're sick of the standardized stuff. Mine's—well, mine's different, you know."

"It's wonderful, darling. We'll have such times together. Do you know, I believe you're feeling better now than since you came back."

"I certainly do, Cora. I work all day and half the night. When you were in Paris I was working awfully hard. Sometimes I missed you."

"Cyril!"

"Yes. You have done lots for me, you know. Now I'm started you'll be able to give up this beastly outfit."

"Oh, not yet, Cyril. Tell me"—coaxingly—"did you really miss me while I was away so long?"

"Of course. Why on earth did you come home in that roundabout way? I wanted you."

"Well, I'd never seen the Mediterranean, Cyril. Weren't you jealous because I was away so long, enjoying myself?"

"Good Lord, no. You're Cora! You're my blessed angel. Why, the very idea is out of the question."

"Cyril, I believe you're the most extraordinary husband a girl ever had."

"Am I? Why?"

"You're so absolutely straight!" There was the sound of another kiss.

"I don't know what you mean, Cora."

"Why, listen. Suppose I said to you: 'Cyril, there is a man hidden in that wardrobe.' What would you do?"

"Do? Why—oh, you're talking rubbish. You! Do put your things on and come on out to dinner. I've tons to tell you. We're having a little bust up at the studio afterward."

"I'm ready, darling. Shall we go?"

Captain Musker, with his acute sense of hearing, was able to follow them out to the hall door, and he fancied Cora slammed it harder than was actually necessary in order to let him know they were gone. He felt stifled in that place hung with the rows of fragrant garments. He wiped his forehead with his handkerchief. He turned the handle gently and stepped out into Cora's bedroom.

There was no one in the apartment. Out in front, the *atelier* was lit by a single high-power globe in front of the desk. Captain Musker looked round him thoughtfully. He noticed a writing pad by the telephone on her dressing table. He took it and wrote on it two words and his initials. It was against his character to give in with grace. It was the most humiliating moment of his life. He wanted revenge, but there was nothing he could do. Outside was New York. He laid the piece of paper by the bottle of *Toujours Fidèle* and went out.

Cora Saverey, coming in at midnight, found the note and smiled happily.

It read: "*You win.*"

THE ROVING HEART

THREE times in the year since he had left New Haven, Edward Priestley Plumtre Brownlow had been fired; and on each of those three occasions the varying phraseology of his employers had camouflaged the same sinister conviction. Hammond, of Bradley, Hammond & Company, investment brokers, who hated all college boys anyhow, anywhere and for all time, told Edward P., after three months, that he was "too damn big for his boots." He added, with gratuitous savagery, that Edward P. had "more initials than brains," which was not true. Edward P. had more brains than Hammond, but they were not the kind of brains to make the captain of a tramp steamer, lying at the foot of Twenty-third Street, buy International Quartz at forty-two or Trans-Pacific Gelatin Preferred at ninety. Edward P.'s manner antagonized many people, including the masters of ships.

Then there was Mr. Halliburton, in charge of publicity for the Reavel-Grey Corporation. The business of the Reavel-Grey people was to get money for anybody who felt he ought to have it. If this sounds fantastic, it is only because it is not the custom, in publicity circles, to call a spade a spade. Mr. Halliburton, for example, would have referred to that useful appliance as a basic implement of nation-wide service, which is true, and if you like that sort of thing, beautiful. The fact remains that when a university, a hospital, or a business feels that the endowments or capital stock are not coming their way fast enough, they are in the habit of calling in the Reavel-Grey Corporation; and they, in turn, send down one of their

men to cover the situation and write up a series of compelling circulars. Here was a career for Edward Priestley Plumtre Brownlow, and he muffed the first assignment, a small New England college. Perhaps they should not have sent a man who had been two years in Harkness Memorial.

"I'll tell you what's the matter with you," said the irritated Halliburton. "You've got a swelled head, Mr. Bally Brownlow."

Halliburton was a good man, and he held the view that small accounts became big ones in time. They didn't lose that college account, but Edward P. lost his job.

Finally there was Crump & Company, manufacturers of a supposedly infallible steam packing. It is no part of this story to spoil Crump's game, but the truth must be told. Crump's Packing was not an indispensable factor in a citizen's daily life. Children did not cry for it, and a man's wife could not be approached to use her feminine influence in its favour. The average woman does not care what packing is used in her husband's factory boiler room. Crump's product, therefore, had to be sold. It had to be sold in competition with half a hundred other almost identical, equally efficient combinations of asbestos and other things. If a young man could clear his expenses selling Crump's Double Ex, Crump's Super Ex, and Crump's Excelsior Hydraulic Gaskets, he was a good salesman. A hard-boiled purchasing agent was not easy to interest in Crump's products. The sales manager, Harvey Crump, Jr., was not at all satisfied. He was a believer in psychology himself, but psychology did not seem to have provided for handling a product whose virtues eluded the white-collar man, yet had to be sold to that dignitary. He had tried to make machinists into salesmen, but it is a singular fact that a machinist often makes a good hotel manager, garage owner, or laundry proprietor, but inevitably fails

as a salesman. So he tried out the scheme of a young man "educated in some Eastern university, cultured and of good address." He advertised. He got Edward P.

"If you don't get rid of that enlarged ego, young feller me lad," he said to Edward P., "I'd hate to think where you'll land finally. Who do you think you are, if it isn't a rude question?"

But while all these definitions of Edward P.'s character and temperament were good enough and sincere enough, they were prejudiced views. They did not tell the whole story. All they achieved was to put Edward P. out on the street, depending once more upon the eight hundred dollars a year he had inherited from an English aunt, and by no means convinced that his late employers were right. Edward P., it must be admitted, was not easy to understand all at once.

When at last he left the office of Harvey Crump, Jr., which was a smelly place just off South Street, he walked along past the ships whose bows, held fast by hawsers to the quays, leaned away slightly, as though they were against the enforced seclusion among those shabby sheds, and longed to pull out and head for open sea. This feeling of wanting to make a break away from the thralldom of the city found an echo in the mind of young Edward P. He suddenly asked himself why he submitted to the conventional business ethics of American life. They had no more to do with him personally than with the sailors on that Greek steamer he saw discharging currants and peanuts. His father had been a professor of Greek in England, and when Edward P. was a year old, an offer had come from an American college. Now Professor Brownlow was dead, and his widow lived just out of Boston on the insurance money.

The name on the Greek steamer recalled all this to

Edward P. It was *Eleusis*. His father had left a monograph on the Eleusinian mysteries. What were they, he wondered as he watched an athletic young man take long loping strides across the street from the next dock. His attention fixed. He knew that chap!

The chap reached the sidewalk, and became aware of Edward P.'s scrutiny. His tanned face broke into an expression of astonishment and pleasure.

"No!" he bellowed. "It's not old Browny!" And he clutched Edward P.'s arm.

"Yes," said that young gentleman, looking down at the other man's vest pocket, which was full of coloured stylographic pens with gold clips. "How are you, Pratt?"

"Same old Browny," mused Mr. Pratt, smiling. "What are you doing?"

"Nothing," said Edward P., and looked at his feet before glancing past Joe Pratt's ear.

"Mean you're hunting a job?"

For a moment Edward P. was on the point of nodding, but he shook his head and formed the almost inaudible negative with his firm, insolent lips. Well, he wasn't just then. He was, to tell the truth, reconsidering the whole question of a business career for himself. It might be all right for the general run of fellows, but there was nothing in it for him. He looked at last directly upon Joe Pratt. It was not the same old Joe, by any means. Joe was an improvement on the Yale Joe. He was thicker, quicker, slicker, and, strangest of all, Joe's face had a summer tan above his overcoat and muffler. Subconsciously Edward P., noticing this anomalous bronzed Joe, looked across at the dock. He saw it was leased by the Honduran Fruit Company, and a ship, painted white, and with a yellow stack, was discharging bunches of green bananas.

Edward P. made a supreme effort and conquered his curiosity. He glanced at Joe Pratt again and waited for him to speak. Which Joe did. He was a simple, attractive chap, and he discovered no secret difficulties in his own nature to prevent him telling his news.

"Listen," he said, "you'll be on your way somewhere, maybe? No? Then come up to the club and let's lunch."

What Edward P. wanted Joe to understand but could not overcome his own reluctance to explain, was that he never went to the Yale Club. He knew Joe would ask why, and if Edward P. had been able to answer he would have been another person altogether. The whole inside of him would have poured out. The keys of heaven and hell would have been delivered over to him, and he would have achieved a totally new and marvellous balance of forces within himself. Strange to say, he hated to think of this happening, and at the same time wished it might happen. But he said nothing, and half an hour later they were at lunch in the gallery of that noble refectory.

And Joe Pratt, very full indeed of his "adventures," talked of the work on which he was engaged.

Edward P. listened. The trouble with Edward P., however, was that even when he just listened, his head bent in apparent attention, his attitude struck people as arrogant. As though he were thinking: "How long is this fool going to bore me with his gabble?" "It stuck out all over," as Halliburton of the Reavel-Grey concern had once complained—this impression that he was some sort of superior being. Fortunately for Joe Pratt, this phase of his friend's character did not obtrude itself on him. He was too busy eating, too keen on telling his tale. And it must be admitted at once that his tale did not sound very credible to Edward P.

"An observer?" he muttered. "What is there to observe?"

"You'd be surprised how much there is to observe between a plantation in Honduras and a box car on a float in the East River," laughed Joe good-naturedly. "And it all has to go down in the records too. That's the job. On the way out you can do what you like."

"What do *you* do?" asked Edward P. in a low tone.

"Well, I mix some with the passengers, but not too much. We're officers, even if we don't wear uniforms. Nice girls as a rule on those ships, though. And then I cultivate the bunch. They can do a lot of harm if I'm crusty, and a lot of good if they make up their minds to like me. I see that they do. And I'm getting results. We had a record, this last trip, of point two per-cent defectives. The boss told me that I might never get a job in the Follies, but as a transportation technologist I was not so dusty. But I suppose you're making your fortune ashore."

"No," remarked Edward P. "I was going to tell you before, only you spoke first. I've just left a position."

"Selling end of the game?"

Edward P. nodded.

"It doesn't suit everybody, Browny," surmised Joe Pratt. "I sometimes think we Easterners get a lopsided view of business, we concentrate so much on merchandising. Now, why don't you come down and try this thing I'm working on? You'll get a hundred and fifty a month, all velvet, and live like a king. And there are openings. There's a chap—I'll tell you the whole story one of these days—he was on the *Graciosa*, and met a girl, and married her. Her old man was owner of a plantation as big as Long Island in Nicaragua, and Jim got a job, *administrador* or something, in the hydro-electric power station."

"Was she a—a Nicaraguan?" asked Edward P. in a harsh tone that with him signified acute interest.

Joe made a rather Latin-American gesture—shoulders hunched, palms upward, corners of his mouth drawn down.

"Search me. I believe she'd be called that, though her father was a Belgian and her mother a Costa Rican. Good-looker, anyhow, and Jim's fixed for life. They're crazy to marry a white man, you know."

"You mean these people aren't white?" said Edward P. in a startled voice.

"Oh, sure they're white; but what I mean, it's North Americans they're after for husbands, old top." And Joe Pratt laughed as though at a reminiscence.

"I thought you meant she was coloured," muttered Edward P. Brownlow. "We had a chap at New Haven, you remember him? Guirola—brown as a nut."

"You'll be as brown as a nut after a few weeks on the plantations," said Joe briskly. He had already learned to avoid the problem of race in the Central Republics. "Why don't you try it, Browny? I'll take you down to see old Faulkner."

For a moment Edward P. sat in silence, his scornful expression concentrated on the tablecloth. He was struggling to prevent any sign of the excitement in his mind appearing on the surface. The odours of South Street were still pungent in his nostrils. Still before his eyes was that steamer as he had seen it across the cold wet granite sets of the quays. The trucks driving out smartly, loaded with the great emerald-green capsules of fruit. The sharp wind coming up from the Narrows. A seaman with a dunnage bag on his shoulder and a gramophone under his arm. All these things were working in Edward P.'s soul like a quick yeast, and he struggled to conceal the heaving and sundering of his spiritual fabric.

Joe Pratt had started more than he knew. That tale of the supercargo of the *Graciosa* hung like a jewelled

wraith before Edward P.'s mind as he listened to his friend's words. It duplicated a secret of his heart. It frightened him as well.

At last he said: "Why not, Joe?"

This austerity of manner concealed from the world the true character of the young gentleman and lost him the approval of merchandising executives. And in another way—so wonderful is the law of compensation—he gained. It made casual affiliations with the kittenish flappers of his day and city out of the question. It antagonized the capable stenographers and secretaries with whom he might have made friends. There are no girls on earth less able to endure patronage than those of New York City. There was something of the young seigneur about Edward P. Even when it was (occasionally) identified with English hauteur, his manner was too pronounced to be surmounted. He was not girl-shy. Rather was it the girls who left him alone. He made them afraid to live. They were aware, somehow, that he was on his way towards other, more complex adventures.

And in his own private thoughts Edward P. had grand ideas about women. He preferred to exist in solitary dignity rather than philander with the common run of wage-earning husband-snatching girls within reach. He had a habit of settling his cuffs as though they were ruffles, and he sought in vain for dignity in those girls. He dreamed of "an affair," and in that phrase is expressed the naïve inexperienced heart of Edward Priestley Plumtre Brownlow. Virtue and courage he would have, but above all he waited for the beauty and the gallantry of exotic passion.

During the days when he prepared for his new work his mind dwelt constantly upon the story of the *Graciosa's* supercargo. Edward P. knew as little of Belgians and Costa Rican high-bred señoritas as he did of Nicaraguan politics.

It was the exotic strangeness of the adventure. He was American, and underneath that he was English; and he had a double hereditary lease in the belief that foreign women possess secrets of love undreamed of by the girls of his own race. Once, in an Italian restaurant on Forty-seventh Street, as he sat at dinner, a girl came in and stood near him waiting for a seat. And the dark eyes in her pearl-white face, the scarlet lips, the full yet gracile curving of her breasts and hips, the disconcerting pungency and unfamiliarity of the perfume in which she stood, as in an invisible enchantment, had gone to Edward P.'s head and made it dizzy. To possess a creature like that! But he couldn't have spoken to her, even. Didn't know her language—even supposing a man with a trim black beard had not come up and joined her. The excitement in the young man's mind had died away, but in his dreams that girl had been the type he had desired for his adventurings.

For there was nothing tender in his attitude toward the objects of his desire. He pondered at times this inability of his to slough off his shell of dignified disdain, to unbend. Somehow he always imagined the woman at his feet, grateful if he only threw her an amiable glance, permitted her to put her ivory arms about his neck and lay her dark shining head upon his breast. He became very interested in the old-fashioned words describing complaisant yet passionately faithful women. The stories he read in the newspapers of love nests distressed him. Edward P. never in his life wanted a love nest. Those people had no dignity. It was a hole-and-corner business. It repelled him as nasty, commonplace, and disgusting. Sparrow's nests rather! And he concluded that a man had to get away from his dull environment, get away to the Orient, or the tropics at least, to savour the real wine of life. And here was the

chance, chucked to him by Joe Pratt of all people, in his hand. He had a suspicion, and it became a conviction before Joe sailed away again, that Joe could never capitalize the romantic possibilities of his job. Edward P. by no means admired that fellow on the *Graciosa.* That was not what he himself looked forward to—a flop into a soft job and a soft domesticity. Not at all. He visualized Edward Priestley Plumtre Brownlow, one of these days, filling a very different rôle, possibly a tragic one. Even if it were not quite that, it would be a striking, glamorous, stormy rôle. He would be absorbed in himself and his woman; yet the waves of that upheaval would break on distant shores and mould the policies of foreign lands.

And as the days wore on and the time of the sailing of the *Sonambula,* to which Edward P. had been appointed, approached, he began to see the girl, like a shadow in an opal. He became aware, curiously enough, of her spiritual and emotional equipment rather than of her bodily form. She was languorous and dark, with eyes like misty jewels above a red mouth, but beyond that he could not divine her presence. She loved him, however, and she was ready to follow him on his stormy way to a distinguished position in a mountainous tropical land. And so far from this affair being an untidy secret in some obscure apartment in New York, it would go round the world as a great love—it would surround them like a radiance.

It had happened before, he reflected with unsmiling, scornful lips, as the *Sonambula,* with her white flanks, yellow funnel and shining ports like a yacht, sailed out from the shadow of the Brooklyn Bridge and headed for Cuba.

Edward P. was looking out of one of the lower tier of portholes as the ship swung in the stream after backing out from the dock, and he was aware of an extraordinary lightness of spirit. He saw himself on the threshold, not of a

supreme adventure, but of a series of sensuous episodes. That lovely girl, whose image flickered in his mind like the shadow in the heart of an opal, was only one of a long procession. The movement, the vibration of the *Sonambula* going astern, the mechanical waving of pygmy figures on the dock, the gay streamers of coloured paper trailing across the porthole, held in gloved hands above, inspired the young man to a sober ecstasy of romance. Why not, he asked himself, see it all? He put out his hand and caught a coloured streamer.

He recalled during the voyage that the act had had about it an impulsive character unusual—for him. And no sooner did he grasp that yawing ribbon of orange-coloured paper, and feel, after a single split-second's pause, a questioning, answering tension, than his fermenting thoughts swirled in a vortex of heady conjectures. He gave a faint jerk, and waited. The dock and the waving squad blurred his vision, and he felt a cautious, wondering pull in reply. Edward P. climbed on the settee, and twisting his head to look upward, thrust his shoulders against the polished frame of the window.

His eyes instinctively followed the long curve of the paper streamer to the rail of the promenade deck, and he saw her. She was foreshortened for him, of course—nothing save her face and shoulders and a gloved hand showing over the teak rail. Yet for him it was, at that moment, sufficient. An extraordinary glow assailed him as she caught his glance, and smiled, and gave the ribbon a fresh pull so that it broke and blew away. And then she laughed and made an indescribable gesture of friendliness with her hand, and vanished.

It was that last gesture which overcame his actual timidity and enabled him, later in the afternoon, to drop into the chair beside her and begin a conversation. Because

in spite of his magnificent ideas about his future Edward P. was timid on approaching women. Especially such women as this. If it had not been that he was sure of the hat and the hair that nearly veiled one eye, he would have been at a loss to convince himself that so seductive a girl had smiled down at him and made that gesture.

"Oh, it was you? How funny! Is your cabin on that deck? We have a suite. Yes, there. What?" She listened to his almost inaudible mutter. "Oh, yes, it's convenient, but I'd just as soon be downstairs—to sleep. People are always talking half the night outside up here. We came over on the *Doric*, and you wouldn't believe the conversation that took place. I wondered when some of those people slept. All day, I guess."

She laughed pleasantly, as though at the curious contrast between her funny foreign accent and her perfect mastery of English idiom, and asked him whether he were on a cruise or going to the tropics. He said he was on a cruise.

"We get off at Barrios," she told him. "Have you ever been there? It is hot, I guess. No, we go to Salvador. That is the way. Over the mountains through Guatemala, to San Salvador. You are American? I thought so. When you look up from your cabin, I think, 'He is an American.' "

He asked her why, a little suspiciously, and she laughed and looked out across the green and white waters of the Atlantic. He wanted to insist upon an answer to his question, not comprehending that in her own style she had already given him one, extraordinarily vivid and illuminating. She was wonderful to him. She was everything he had ever dreamed of, and more. She was so gracile as she lay there in a deck chair, so exquisitely complete; and her dark eyes, while she was uttering those pleasant phrases in a sweet melodious twitter, were speaking eloquently

to him of future ecstasies. It seemed to him that after all, the drab world of business, in which he had failed so often in New York, was the dismal dream, and this enchanting existence, sliding along under bright sunshine and above a jade-green sea, with a ravishing girl becoming more and more intimate in her confessions, was the reality. And it was long after tea-time that she woke him from his reverie by saying that she must go and look after her husband.

"Your—your husband?" he remarked fatuously.

"Yes, he is not well—he is not ever very well. I have to work, you see. Perhaps I shall see you again. After dinner? That will be nice; I like to have somebody to talk to, on board. So!"

She made a charming little foreign gesture, and he sprang up to help her rise. Her hand grasped his firmly, and he felt a pressure. He looked dizzily at the fabulous galaxy of huge diamonds and emeralds on her fingers. She gave him one more glance of friendly yet amused significance, and vanished into the alleyway leading to the upper suites.

It was luck for him to find himself at dinner beside the assistant purser, an agreeable youth about his own age. Edward P. brought the conversation round to the passengers. There were two hundred of them, the young man said, and he didn't know them apart yet, but they could easily find out who had Suite F on the promenade deck. If he recollected rightly, it was a diplomat and his wife. Some guy returning from one of these European conferences of capitalists.

"A native of Salvador?" suggested Edward P.

"Not necessarily," responded the assistant purser. "These small places have citizens of all nations."

But when they visited the young man's desk, where the

passenger list lay outspread, it was a surprise to Edward P. to discover the purser's surmise to have been fairly close to the facts. He looked down at the name, Estebán Loyola Peresoff and wife, with that faint subconscious feeling of distaste for foreigners which comes from generations of unmingled blood. Mrs. Peresoff! He went out into the brightness of the promenade deck pondering the mystery. Mr. Peresoff, he had noticed, was fifty years old. Twenty years older than Mrs. Peresoff. Here was a double shock to his delicate sensibilities. That lovely being thirty years old! He didn't believe it. Thirty, to Edward P., was elderly. It was impossible. That gesture from the rail, those brilliant eyes beneath lashes of extravagant length and seductiveness, those exquisitely slender ankles he had glimpsed as he helped her to rise! He walked along frowning. To his undisciplined and roving heart there was discovered the eternal lure of the older woman, experienced in the world—with a polished beauty that the flip bobbed-haired toilers of the skyscrapers could never imitate—yet dominated by his own personality.

A dozen times, as he walked round the promenade, he doubted his own emotions. In anyone else, in Joe Pratt, for example, it would have seemed to him stark lunacy to fall in love with this Mrs. Peresoff, whose name he had noted, with a panicky elation, was Krysanthia. But for himself, passing the other passengers with a blank, unseeing gaze, he steadied his trembling nerves against the accomplished fact of the woman's candid desire for his company. Round again, he passed the windows of the suite, and saw her coiled hair with a high comb of honey-coloured shell, before a mirror. She was coming. The other room of the suite was lit by a shaded lamp. The young man tried to picture that room to himself. He saw an elderly, emaciated, savage invalid, maliciously demanding degrading services from his lovely slave. Edward P. built up with swift strokes

of a young imagination a dreadful story of an elderly diplomat getting a young girl into his power and holding her in his grasp while he plotted disaster to unhappy kingdoms. The lurid tale was complete as he came round once more and found Krysanthia Peresoff in her chair. She smiled and patted the seat beside her, and in a kind of swooning dream he came over.

He had never met such a woman. It was not her beauty, which might have been paralleled on the *Sonambula*. It was not her marvellous gown of close-fitting black with a cloak of orange silk edged with fur. It was not even her exotic character and foreign speech which carried the young man forward into the depths of intimacy in so short a time. It was Krysanthia's acceptance of him apparently at his own valuation, with a faint yet delicious overtone of maternity in her glance as she met his eyes. It carried him forward as on a flood. He was like a man swept away in a current, helpless yet able to conceive clearly what was happening to him. So he imagined. His doubts disappeared unnoticed. He discovered himself talking, talking, as he had imagined a man ought to talk in such an adventure. Their chairs were in a shadow cast by a deck beam. Sometimes he felt dizzy when after a sentence, spoken in his flat New England voice, she laughed and put her jewelled hand to his lips and murmured: "S-sh! My husband! Be careful. He sleeps."

"Oh, well," he muttered once when she did this, and caught her hand. And she looked at him as though in dazzled wonder, and let him hold her hand for a moment before withdrawing it so gently he scarcely noticed the action in his excitement. It was eleven o'clock before she rose, and making one of her inexpressibly eloquent gestures, walked to the rail to watch the coastwise lights.

They were close to the curtained bedroom of her suite,

and he could have seen the faint illumination of a reading-lamp shining through, throwing up a triple circle of light and shadow on the panelled ceiling, had he been looking. But Edward Priestley Plumtre Brownlow, recovering from the sombre effort of following her across that narrow space, saw nothing save Krysanthia Peresoff.

"I don't care," he muttered, his lips close to her neck, his imagination aflame as he watched the voluptuous curve of her throat, the blending of beauty and character in the salient roundness of the jaw, the delicately emphasized cheek bones, and the straight patrician nose. She turned as though to speak, and he saw the softness of her glance harden for a moment, gazing past him into the gloom ahead.

"Sh!" she repeated with one finger uplifted. "There is some one." And she looked down at the phosphorescent passage of the sea.

He turned to see what she meant, and saw a tall figure in uniform silhouetted in the glow from the entrance hall, legs apart, hands behind the back, watching them intently.

"I think it is the captain," murmured Krysanthia without looking up. Edward P. leaned on the rail beside her and asked in a low voice: "How do you know?"

"He sent an invitation to come to his table," said the girl, "and then, this evening, he came and talked."

"To you?"

Krysanthia Peresoff laughed, but did not take her eyes from the rushing tide below.

"Well!"

He glanced again forward and saw the tall figure of Captain Musker, who was relieving the regular commander of the *Sonambula*, looking intently in their direction. It seemed to Edward Priestley Plumtre Brownlow that the sinister tentacles of the business and executive world were

not so far away, after all. Mr. Faulkner, the elderly manager of the department, had warned him that the ship's captain was supreme, "and our policy is to coöperate at all times, Mr. Brownlow."

Smooth words. Edward P. did not see himself coöperating with that austere figure, who remained motionless on the otherwise empty deck. He turned hurriedly to Krysanthia. "You want me to go?"

"Oh, no. But it's very late. Perhaps——"

"I'll go. Shall I see you to-morrow? Here in the same place?"

"Yes, I shall be here, of course. Be careful!"

He had raised her hand to his lips, had kissed it with trembling, panic-stricken intensity, and started off along the deck towards the enigmatic figure in the distance.

But when he reached his destination, which was the entrance hall, he did not know what to do. Captain Musker, at all times in command of his ship, had no intention of putting himself in a false position with a young squirt from the office. He said nothing. He did nothing. His steady pale eyes, in a face resembling those of ecclesiastical statesmen of Seventeenth Century Europe, never wavered. He did not look at the young man, but permitted him to pass, to hesitate, and then to proceed to the forward rail.

And leaning over there, the freshening breeze on his hot face, Edward P. recovered his scornful coolness. Nothing had happened. It was none of Captain Musker's business what a chap said to a passenger. Stood there like a stone image. Waiting to be coöperated with, no doubt. Well! He turned with a start as someone touched him on the shoulder. A bell-hop stood at his elbow.

"The captain wants to see you in his room, mister."

Mister! Even Edward P. knew the boy wouldn't have called a passenger that. As he climbed a ladder bearing a

blunt warning "*No Admittance*," he had the feeling again of being no more than an underling in an office.

"It's usual to knock, I may mention," said Captain Musker, over his shoulder.

He sat at his desk in a room of polished mahogany and sumptuous white enamel panelling. There were portraits of women in frames on the desk. They seemed to gaze at the young man in silent astonishment and contempt at his bungling audacity.

Captain Musker continued to look over his shoulder. His formidable composure remained unbroken as his gaze, beginning at the young man's feet, finally rested on his tormented, scornful face. Then he turned and went on with his writing.

Edward P. made an attempt to speak. He passed his tongue over dry lips and looked round for some familiar human belongings. There was nothing of the kind in the place save those portraits of women, whose faces above the green-shaded desk lamp stared out, white and scandalized, at the interloper.

"You wished to see me?" he got out at last.

"See you? Well, naturally. Quite a show you are putting on this evening."

"I don't quite appreciate——" he began, and waited, pondering, as the captain swung round.

"You're a fast worker," remarked the captain, throwing one leg over the other. "Care for a word of advice?"

"—what difference it makes," Edward P. concluded his reply doggedly.

"I know you haven't been to sea before, Mr.—er—Mr." —the Captain glanced at a paper on his desk—"Brownlow; but you must have noticed that I asked you a question."

Edward P. was aware of a sudden, swiftly passing blaze

of disgust for the whole scheme of modern industrial civilization, which forced him into situations like this. He detected in Captain Musker's manner the same underbred, contemptuous animosity toward him which had distinguished his employers ashore.

"Oh, yes," he said loudly. He found himself looking at a barometer, whose needle pointed to "*Fair.*" Captain Musker, tapping a pencil end-on upon his desk, studied his new supercargo for a moment before saying in his even, competent monotone:

"Well, I don't regard entertaining lady passengers as one of your duties, Mr. Brownlow. I'll attend to that myself, if it's all the same to you. Especially suite passengers. That's all."

Edward P. was surprised to hear his own voice saying that if a lady preferred his society, he would probably continue to let her have it.

"Is that so? Well, I suppose you know what you are here for. I don't. Leave the door where it is, Mr.—er—Brownlow. And think it over."

Those on board the *Sonambula* who were familiar with Captain Musker's seignorial attitude toward women were surprised to observe that in this case he did nothing. He kept away from Krysanthia Peresoff's corner of the promenade deck. He said not a word more to young Mr. Brownlow. The *Sonambula*, sailing rapidly toward Havana, carried the usual cargo of gossip. Lying horizontal in deck chairs, from which drooped and swung enormous square bags of tapestried design and Oriental metal work, numerous wealthy women read new novels, knitted woollen sweaters, and discussed the Peresoffs without knowing more than the deck steward could glean from a conversation relayed from the purser's office. They also discussed Captain Musker, approvingly, until he began to spend consider-

able time beside Carmelita Agramonte, a dancer who had been engaged by the Casino at Havana.

The fact was Captain Musker, in offering advice to Edward P. Brownlow, had been sincere and disinterested. He had never any intention of meddling with the Peresoffs. He was afraid of them. He knew something of Estebán Loyola Peresoff's career as a Central American capitalist and diplomat. Captain Musker never interfered with that kind of passenger. Moreover, Krysanthia was not his style. She was a Greek. She was a woman, if he knew anything, who would make trouble. Her husband might be much older than she was, but he was wealthy and crazy about her. Captain McBride of the *Jocotan* had told him about the Peresoffs. Captain Musker found his conclusions verified by noting Krysanthia's technique with that green flipper from the office. Transparent vamping, committing herself to nothing, amusing herself for a few days. The stylish, supple figure of Señorita Agramonte, with the promise of an exclusive diversion in Havana, made Captain Musker dismiss the whole business from his mind.

To the rest of the ship the seclusion of Señor Peresoff was the principal subject of conjecture. It formed a sombre background to the comedy of that nice boy making a fool of himself over a middle-aged, foreign, married woman. There was nothing actually mysterious in an elderly man, recovering from a touch of neuritis, keeping to his room for a few days, but the owners of the big tapestry hold-alls gabbled just the same. They were skeptical of Krysanthia's devotion to that invisible husband. They formulated the well-tried theory that women from the Mediterranean possessed some sort of magic art, by which Northern men are bewitched into an infatuated fidelity, forgetting their duty to themselves and to the women of their own race. They were convinced that if Mr. Peresoff

knew what was going on, something interesting would happen.

Nevertheless, Krysanthia, emerging, as the ship ran south, in garments of distracting modishness, seemed unaware of impending doom. She was oblivious of the cold glances directed at her over the edges of realistic novels. In her own way, which was the latest Parisian innovation shot by a curious touch of barbaric splendour, she was the best-dressed woman on the *Sonambula*, just as Carmelita Agramonte was the best half-dressed woman at dinner every night. Krysanthia never went downstairs to eat. Sometimes the steward arranged a meal of delicate fruits and coffee on a card table by her deck chair, and Edward P. would be in attendance, crouched as though in a fever of leashed desire, rarely breaking an eloquent silence, as though he wore an invisible muzzle—so the deck steward, talking to the stewardess in the lower port alleyway, described the affair going on on deck.

"Like a dog watchin' his mistress," he remarked, looking at his toothpick sagely.

"Go on with you, you and your mistresses," urged the lady with scorn.

"Fairly eatin' out of her hand," he went on, nodding. "What I want to know is, how he gets away with it, with a husband just inside the door, as you may say."

"Why don't you ask her? You seem friendly enough, I must say. She talks to you as much as she does to that boy."

"That's a fact," said the startled deck steward. "Didn't I say she had taste, that girl? She's seen a lot, I may tell you, Miss Wicks."

"I don't need to be told that," muttered Miss Wicks with subtle innuendo. "I'll say he's clever."

"Max," she went on to a man with an old scar on his

swart face, "Max, we're talking about your party in Suite F. What's the husband doing these days?"

"He's gettin' better," said Max. He was the only authority on Señor Peresoff, but it was difficult to get him to give any information. Max had been a valet, and had curious old-fashioned ideas concerning his employers' affairs. He coughed and passed along to the kitchens.

Max might have told them that Estebán Loyola Peresoff not only knew what was going on. He had alluded to it in French, which Max understood, to his wife.

"Why do you not let him alone?" he had inquired. "There will be a suicide on your hands."

"No, he is not one to destroy himself," she had replied calmly. "He looks to enjoy himself, I think."

But to Edward Priestley Plumtre Brownlow, Krysanthia Peresoff maintained an air of being the courageous victim of cruel circumstances. Only a woman could have seen through the infinitely fine shades of voice and phrase by which she built up in the young man's mind this imaginary situation. She built it up firmly with the illusion that he must be at all costs prudent, for her sake, since people would misunderstand.

"People very easy misunderstand a woman like me, I guess," she told him.

"You don't understand me," he muttered, staring at the horizon. She touched his hand as though accidentally, but he felt the light pressure.

"Well, there's nothing to do but go on and live, I guess," she said. "Will you take me ashore in Havana if—you know? I'll let you know if I can come."

He made an impetuous movement, but she brought him up standing. She smiled at once.

"I've told you so many times you ought not to do that. Not on the ship, I mean."

He remained motionless, brooding over her, his breath coming hard, his mind clouded with the emotions evoked by her husky and amorous voice.

"If we go on shore, in Havana, then," he said, very low, "will it be different?"

"S-sh! I don't promise. I can't. But if I have time——"

"Yes, you can!" he broke out. "You can if you really want to. I say you've got to promise me now. I won't let you——"

With a sudden movement he swung her around the corner abaft the suites, where there was a stairway to the upper deck. She had never permitted herself to be taken away from the familiar corner. Now she no longer resisted, as though she were confident after all in her own resources, able to manage her own destiny.

Key West was away on the beam. The night was impregnated with stars and the remote pallor of the Milky Way. From the radio office came a staccato hiss and a faint whirr of machinery as a message fled out into luminous darkness. As he stood with Krysanthia Peresoff by the rail between the lifeboats, unseen even by the occupants of discreet deck chairs beyond, the moment was for him one of exultation. He was flooded with that supreme felicity and pride which overwhelm the young man who feels a woman for the first time yielding to his masculine power. In a trance he crushed the bright painted lips to his own.

She did not look at him. Her senses were alert, but it passed through her sinuous Hellenic mind how extraordinary were men, who cared nothing for a woman but only for women. This boy, who knew no more of her mind and spirit than of anything else in the world, clutching at her, holding her as though he'd bought her in a shop.

"We must be careful," she whispered. "Not now. To-

morrow, yes! That's it. I must go, I guess. Yes. I'll come back. Wait for me. That's right."

And before he could emerge from the swooning delight of her lips she was gone.

He walked forward among the discreet chairs and soughing ventilator cowls. Ahead was the bridge. He could see the commander's windows open and bright lights sending beams across the gangways. Almost before he realized it, he was close to one of the windows. The voluptuous arms and shoulders of Carmelita Agramonte became visible as she threw back her head and laughed at a remark Captain Musker, standing near the doorway, smoking a cigar, had made in his imperfect Spanish.

The young men walked to and fro for a long time, absorbed in the thought of Krysanthia's return. He felt proud of his resolution. That, after all, was the way to do it: take charge. Stand no nonsense. She had promised. The glimpse of the dancer in the commander's cabin gave a touch of sophistication to his thoughts. He did not know that Captain Musker and the lady understood each other thoroughly. They also understood the situation. The very ring of her laughter, the commander's easy pose as he stood with one foot on the polished brass step of his doorway, showed how little they had to fear from the world's censorious consideration. And presently, as the young man walked to and fro, the dancer came out, stood by the rail with the captain for a few moments and then, flinging her cigarette into the sea, bade him a good-night in which cordiality and mockery blended with anticipation of the morrow.

Not for Edward P. was that suave acceptance of world and flesh as components of a civilized scheme of existence. Why did she not come? Couple by couple, as the lights vanished forward and aft and the night wore on, the chairs

emptied, so that at last he was alone, slinking among shadows and harassed by the stealthy hiss of the radio. Then he went down, catching a glimpse of the slim oval of the vessel's shape slipping through the darkling tideway of the sea. A form reclined in her chair in the darkness, and his heart leaped. He advanced silently to join her. And a man's slow deep voice sent a spasm of terror, raw terror, through him, such as he would have felt had the ship suddenly turned over upon him.

"A very beautiful night, is it not?" said the voice, and the young man made an effort.

"Very. I have been enjoying it up—up on the—the top."

"With my wife. Yes, so I surmised. She is tired and begs to be excused. We are making an excursion in Havana for a couple of days to visit an old friend at Vadado. The warm weather has improved my health, I am glad to say. It is a most beautiful night. You are disappointed, I can see."

The flare of a match showed to the stupefied young man a broad, fleshy face with a bristling black moustache over a strong mouth holding a cigar in huge gold-filled teeth. The flare vanished, but the powerful masculine perfume of a perfecto seemed to hold in its convolutions the solid personality of Estebán Loyola Peresoff.

And out of the trance, in which he felt himself suspended, Edward P. heard his companion talking, in a low, modulated voice. The cigar glowed with a sudden waxing of brilliance, as though to emphasize the words coming through the darkness, as though it were the actual intelligence behind that unemotional voice.

Edward Priestley Plumtre Brownlow lay motionless in the chair in which he had made love, his face a mask of pallor, as though he had died and a satirical spirit were in-

terrogating his corpse. He was aware of what his companion said, as one recalls a dream. His own personality seemed to be dissolving. . . . He listened. The voice went on:

". . . So that, you see, was how we came to meet. Romantic, you think, no doubt. An exile, returning to purchase arms and ammunition to defend his adopted country from the revolutionaries, meets a beautiful girl of his own race in prison for stabbing an Ottoman officer. More romantic than that, even. The general with whom I was to do business had designs. He admired her. To snatch a sword from a drunken fool's hand and drive it through his forearm takes courage and strength. She is very strong, you know. She is marvellously passionate. You doubt this, I dare say. You do not know much about women. You do not know much about anything. I am going to tell you a little. . . .

"Well, was that all, you say? No, it was only the beginning. He had designs. I had to get her away, buy her, if you like. She was able to escape to Paris. I joined her there. Was that all? Oh, no. She did not wish to marry me then. She would have left me if she had had any money. Of course to you that sounds like the end. It was only the beginning. Women are like that. Those that are any good have to be captured. Now you—you think you can pick them up like newspapers in a train. Only discarded ones! First, you must know you have found something good, unusual, suited to yourself. But of course you don't understand. You wish to amuse yourself, nothing more.

"No, she wished to leave me. An officer of the Carabinieri had been kindness itself on her journey to Paris. However, he saw at once that he had nothing but trouble before him, and he disappeared. So we were married. Eight years ago. Well, and here we are."

The full, inexorable voice rolled on through the night. Slowly the young man's nerves calmed to their normal tempo. After all, nothing had happened. He became interested. Estebán Loyola Peresoff smoked cigar after cigar, telling without bitterness the tale of his experiences, his adventures of the soul.

"You think, of course, of shame when there is difficulty with a woman. Many people do. They have the idea that they themselves are clear of all dishonour, and the women they love of absolutely perfect virtue. You think that, eh? Well, it is not really the truth. Men—and women—are human. Love is always imperfect. Have you ever seen a silversmith working on a vase? Hammer, hammer, for days. Many thousands of little blows, strain and tension, to make the thing beautiful and valuable. You have not thought of that, I see. You think you can go into a shop and say: 'I wish for one high-class love affair, please. How much?' Or you even think you can come on a ship and see a woman and say: 'That's very nice, I'll take it.' Oh, yes, many people think it as easy as that.

"And you think, how can a man leave a precious possession without guarding it? Well, I will tell you. He can do it because when a man and a woman have lived together and fought and loved and endured sorrows together, they become each the owner of the other. No matter how far she may run she will come back. *She is no use to another man.* All he sees is the face, the form, the image of something in his own roving heart. That is what you have—a roving heart. I heard you while I was in my bed. I liked your voice. I thought to myself, except that he is getting foolish over Krysanthia, that is a good young man. My wife, she told me you were very nice. She likes young fellows. All women of her age do. Our children died. It is natural, if you have not children, to like the young. It is maternity, and

something else. Perhaps it too is the roving heart."

Edward Brownlow became aware that he was very stiff with remaining so long without moving. He became aware of something happening about him. He could see his companion beneath heavy rugs, in the first ghostly pallor of the dawn, lighting a fresh cigar. He moved painfully and stood up. Estebán Loyola Peresoff stretched out a thick steady arm, the hand covered with black hairs. He pointed ahead.

"There! We shall arrive in an hour or two. If you come to Central America, come and see me. I have influence. Now, however, you will find Havana an agreeable city. Yes, I remember when I was a young man, my father sent me to Paris and I stopped on the way in Havana. Just now it will suit you. I am too old. I have no longer a roving heart!"

He smiled, and begging assistance to rise, showed the young man where a magical city was rising out of the jade and opal sea. It was a city strung with a diamond necklace and crowned with domes and towers against the lifting dawn. And a great beam from the Morro swung round upon it and made it seem sentient and alive, alluring and mysterious, as though it bore within its borders some soothing solace for restless roving hearts.

THE WIFE OF THE DICTATOR

NOBODY on board the *Biskra* had imagined, when the ship was chartered for an extended Southern cruise ("Under the Southern Cross, Rolling Down to Rio and Buenos Aires, the Paris of the Pampas"), that Captain Musker had experienced a savage thrill. Complete as the *Biskra* might be, with her gyroscopic steering gear, radio direction finders, electric telltales and submarine sounding apparatus, whereby any ordinary third officer could hear a shark scrape himself against her bilge keel, there was no instrument yet invented to record the commander's emotional reaction to the list of ports at which he was to call. The last voyage before he went home on leave!

Each of them had its appeal, for in his youth Captain Musker had raked them with the pride of the brass-bounder. Homeward with grain and beef from B. A., coffee from Rio and Santos, nitrate and guano from Chilean ports, he had even arrived in Genoa with a reeking cattle boat from Pernambuco, and had enjoyed his youth. He had lost his passage in Valparaiso and lived a life for two months which his mother had most fortunately known nothing about. Looking out at the brisk young officer on the bridge, who was a Mr. Herbert De Courcy, Captain Musker felt a sudden nostalgia for his unregenerate youth. That young chap had a row of ribbons on his well-made uniform; he cut quite a swath among the girls on Upper Broadway near Columbia University; and he was forever looking after his job. He was looking after it now, leaning over the lofty navigating bridge of the *Biskra* and watching the chief mate on the forecastle as he hauled the

ship a couple of inches ahead. Later he would step ashore in neat tweeds or flannels, take the subway uptown, play tennis, and take a girl out to the movies and a soda parlour. About as exciting, Captain Musker found himself reflecting, as cold mutton fat! By and by he would marry, get promotion, and live in a neat street at Forest Hills or Bay Ridge, with a neat wife, a neat coloured maid, and a neat infant. . . . Captain Musker pulled at his nose.

The past swept over him, and he wondered, not that young men no longer wanted to go to sea, but why they should be so insufferably and unimaginatively efficient. Nothing to do, of course, compared with the old days. Look at that electric hoist—moved at a touch. He recalled the terrible old winches, with exhaust pipes at the bulwarks jerking boiling spray over the poor seamen's naked limbs as they hauled on the big wire. Ha, but it was a man's life, he thought dourly. One went ashore to something else besides "Red-hot Mamma" on a jazz band, and gassy near-beer. Went ashore, and stayed, till the red dawn rushed over the Caribbean from the Windward Islands and the birds cheeped in the mango-patch behind the shuttered houses. That ineffable young De Courcy would be down on the ship at eight o'clock as neat and sharp as a bank clerk coming to work.

Very smart young officer, thought Captain Musker sardonically, and returned to the past.

He remembered now. The turmoil of that time subsided and left one episode like a dark unlighted tower, awash in the tideway of his past. It was, really, the reason for his excitement on hearing that the *Biskra* would make a Southern cruise—right around the continent, down to Rio and Buenos Aires, through the Straits, up to Valparaiso and Guayaquil, though what the passengers would find there rather puzzled the captain. Then Panama City, the Canal

and Caribbean ports. They called, he saw, at Puerto Balboa, in the unrestful republic of Costaragua. He remembered the episode twenty-five years before, when the old steamer *Andromeda*, discharging rails, got blown from her anchorage and ran on a half-tide rock under the lee of a palm-fringed cay. *Andromeda* indeed, then! And he, Harry Musker, second mate, had been ashore. Again he experienced that savage thrill. He had been in love, ferociously in love, with a fifteen-year-old tigress named Dolores Fuenmayor. He remembered that name after all these years. Behind the town, where the beach stretched for miles and the coconut palms hid the house of her parents from the blazing blue of sea and sky, she and he had swung in hammocks under the wild rubber trees and watched the vultures swing in slow circles above the forest.

He remembered. She had been serving in the Cantina del Sol, a dirty little café in the plaza of Puerto Balboa, and he had been fascinated, from the moment he saw her, with that tall vigorous girl whose first response to his ardour was to hurl a glass of beer in his face and then stand up close to him, meeting him eye to eye. Ha, she was a real one, that Dolores! What was it they called it now? Cave-man business! But Dolores had not been so much a cave woman as a tigress. Bite she would, and she was so strong it took him all his time to master her. Because in that dirty little café, with machetes lying naked or in leather scabbards all about, and policemen with ugly German automatics out there across the plaza where the rain streamed as it can only stream in Costaragua in the rainy season, it was no time for the second mate of the *Andromeda* to take any chances. Mr. Harry Musker had clouted her into insensibility before the open-mouthed ragamuffins at the little tables could interfere. Fine doings for an Englishman, he reflected, and went on remembering while

he stood behind the efficient Mr. De Courcy on the bridge of the *Biskra.*

He had been roused to a clear anger by her attack, and there had been not a glimmer of feelings for her as a woman until he had felt his fist crash into her dark fierce face, and she had crumpled, and he had fallen in his headlong rush almost on top of her, on the earthen floor.

It had brought him to his senses, that! Fancy, fighting a girl! Young and beautiful too! He had got hold of her and dragged her into a sitting position. She was heavy. Her dark eyes opened slowly and regarded him. The man who kept the cantina hovered in an ecstasy of apprehension before them, while the rest of the company moved silently out into the plaza. The rain boomed on the galvanized roof of the arcade. The two men were scared, but for different reasons. Harry Musker saw the red on the girl's high cheek bone turn dull bronze colour, where he had hit her. Hit her! He thought he had killed a woman.

And while he stood there, off guard, looking at her anxiously, she had sprung at him again and from her waistband she had drawn a knife. One of his close calls!

Captain Musker walked to the other side of the bridge and looked down at the dirty water of the dock. He shouldn't be thinking of such things. He was supposed to be an experienced middle-aged commander, with a wife and five children in England and a reputation for gallantry all over the world. Why should the news that he was to take the *Biskra* into Puerto Balboa, a clean new place with a busy trade in fruit, coffee, and sugar, bring back that long-buried romance? Dolores would be forty now, nearly the same age as himself.

All very well, but it had been a wonderful time, and he went on remembering. He had nothing to do until the *Biskra* was through with her fuelling. The passengers

would go ashore in Puerto Balboa and take the railway up the Andes to San Benito. No romance down there now. Trains and ships running like trolley cars. And Dolores, with the smouldering black eyes, the tall, sinewy, handsome girl who, when he wrenched her knife from her hand, had tried to sink her big white teeth in his neck! Where was she now? Captain Musker came back to reality by shutting his eyes very tight for a fraction of a second. He found Mr. De Courcy coming over to him. Mr. De Courcy was unaware of the somewhat malicious pleasure his commander derived from contemplating him in his modern perfection. He was unaware that Captain Musker knew he was dying to air his knowledge of Southern ports. He regarded Captain Musker as a Western Ocean man who would get cold feet as soon as he entered the funny old Spanish harbours. He was mistaken. Captain Musker was never troubled by cold feet; nor did he consult a junior officer about his own business. But as Mr. De Courcy came up with respectful alacrity to report something or other, it pleased Captain Musker to ask him abruptly if he knew Puerto Balboa.

"Oh, yes, sir," said the young man. "A terrible dump that is. I was on a fruiter out of New Orleans and——"

"Good holding ground?" asked the Captain, staring at Mr. De Courcy's medal ribbons. Anybody would think a chap would want to forget that damn war business—now.

"Good holding ground? Well, you go alongside, sir——"

"Not the *Biskra*," muttered Captain Musker, and turned away. Mr. De Courcy looked stonily at the Jersey shore for a moment. This skipper was funny. Why did he ask, then, if he knew the place?

Captain Musker was unreasonably irritated at his junior officer for calling Puerto Balboa a dump. It wasn't a dump to the man who had taken Dolores to her father's little

house on the edge of the lagoon, on a mule, and remained there to fall in love with her. While the old *Andromeda* was menacled to that half-tide rock on the cay! The young cub and his ribbons! What sort of fight would he put up if one of his Columbia college girls suddenly flew at his throat with a knife in her fist and tried to kill him? Die of fright, very likely! Captain Musker pulled down the corner of his mouth to suppress the smile evoked by the picture of Dolores strangling Mr. De Courcy.

Other times, other manners, of course. Captain Musker had no intention of reverting to his early exploits. He was going home to England on leave when the ship got back. But he was inexplicably shaken at the prospect of seeing Puerto Balboa again, of making a few discreet inquiries and discovering, if he were lucky, the fate of Dolores Fuenmayor.

The music of the name! Captain Musker was very much of a Nordic, as any of his officers would inform you, but he liked the music of the Latin names. He liked a beautiful woman to have a beautiful name. Some of those he carried, exquisite and attractive as they were, had terrible names.

And so the *Biskra*, commanded by Captain Musker, sailed away to the lands of the Southern Cross with a crowd of prosperous and good-natured people from all the forty-eight states of the Union, bound on a voyage of discovery three hundred and fifty years after Sir Francis Drake had completed his first round-the-world tour. And indeed they made many discoveries of which Sir Francis died in ignorance, and by which perhaps he would have set small store. As for instance, that deck games become monotonous after a few days, that porpoises are all very much the same, that love is a community affair on a ship, and only those who can afford suites have any privacy for it. They discovered that the captain in no way regarded himself as one of their

employees, but that he issued orders concerning behaviour and shoregoing which had to be obeyed. They discovered, for the first time in their lives, some of them, that government, in the last analysis, is a one-man job, no matter how you camouflage it. Captain Musker, for example, never went into conference about anything. He listened, and later issued orders, and it was done. They discovered in due course that they were having a wonderful time, that Captain Musker was a fine chap, and his officers, especially Mr. De Courcy, perfect darlings. This last verdict came from the women. Mr. De Courcy was popular.

Captain Musker, however, kept somewhat to himself during the latter part of the voyage. He was not morose, but he felt disinclined just now for the lighter kind of flirtations which cruise passengers indulge in merely to pass the time from port to port. Captain Musker was not averse to living in solitude for a while. He tried to imagine himself a family man again, taking his silent industrious wife for a trip to London and perhaps Paris. A change for him! He spent long hours pacing the deck outside his cabin, seen afar by passengers aft, thinking of days gone by and reflecting upon the apparent impossibility of a man's living again through his great moments. History might repeat itself, but romance seemed irrevocable. Once over, it was gone. You got married and became responsible and had some money, but where was that marvellous glamour which seemed to hang over the early days? What adventures he had had in Marseilles as an apprentice! And the nights in Genoa, when seventeen of them walked abreast across the Piazza di Ferari, singing "My Gal's a High-born Lady." Or another night when they carried a girl on their shoulders along the Principe, the sterns of the ships crowded with delighted seamen, and deposited her in a boat to be rowed out to a steamer whose captain

had his wife on board. Famous days! All day in the chain locker and all night ashore! Out to Durban on a transport with troops, and running away to join the army, only to be fetched back by the military police. Captain Musker, thinking of those days and the modern Mr. De Courcy and his colleagues, decided that he himself had had a good life. But how impossible to get back to it! And once more, as he watched the lofty distant peaks of the Cordillera, he thought of Dolores Fuenmayor.

Let Mr. De Courcy tell it. Up on Riverside Drive he tried to give the gist of it to his girl friend who was at Columbia. She gazed at the river and wrinkled her forehead in the struggle to visualize the scene. It wasn't so easy.

"The Old Man, he comes out of the elevator into the saloon, and there's these two sitting at his table. The general, he was a dried-up little chap, but his wife, she was one of these full-sized dames. Splendid figure and so on, but no chicken. And the Old Man, he stops dead when he sees her. Absolutely dead in his tracks. I was just opening my napkin when I looked up and saw him. And then he sort of pulls himself together and goes up—and bows—and sits down. And that woman, Señora Marino, wife of General Marino, looked at him without a word."

The young lady was confused. An elevator in a saloon. An old man coming out. She changed the subject. The first thing she planned to do with Mr. De Courcy, as soon as she married him, was to make him get a shore job. What she would have said, or thought, if Mr. De Courcy had told her the whole story, may be only dimly conjectured. She had never been on a sea voyage, and her only contribution to the present narrative consists of her vague comment as she sat gazing at the fleet in the jewelled dusk.

"I suppose," she said slowly, "she resembled someone he'd known in the past."

Mr. De Courcy's girl friend was nearer the mark than either of them dreamed. When Captain Musker came into the saloon on that memorable evening of leaving Puerto Balboa, he received a staggering shock.

He had not been up to San Benito with the passengers. It was a long dusty ride up the mountains, and he decided to visit the harbour master and make a few discreet inquiries.

The place was changed. A solid concrete pier curved round to the cay. The half-tide rock, where the old *Andromeda* had hung for three weeks, had a lighthouse straddled on it. The town ran halfway up the bluff, and screened houses peeped from the trees along the lagoon, where a wireless station now stood.

The harbour master was a newcomer, a Swedish ship captain who had married a Costaraguan.

"Fuenmayor?" he said. "I'll ask my wife. But dere's so many Fuenmayors in dis contree."

Even the Cantina del Sol was gone. The Bank of Costaragua had a concrete office on that corner. But the climate was the same. Sitting with the harbour master at a table on the sidewalk by the Hotel Bolívar, Captain Musker could reconstruct the scene of long ago. And at night, pacing the boardwalk toward the harbour, the fronds of the palmettos gleaming harshly in the arc lights as though they were made of painted iron, he surrendered himself to those reflections which in middle age afford us some compensation for the lost glories of youthful folly. He had no regrets save that in his mind there moved a wonder whether in his brief adventure here in Puerto Balboa he had exhausted all his resources, whether he might not have

achieved a career for himself had he taken his courage in his hands and gone up into those huge silent ranges, which he could see from the harbour, with the sinister glare of forest fires showing up for a moment the lofty summits. The rains were coming.

He wondered, though he knew he was only playing with conjectures. The country had changed. There had been insurrections without number; death and destruction had swept over the land. Now they had a military dictatorship. A general, after defeating the Liberals, had placed one of his own nominees in the presidential palace, and the country was "pacified." And this General Cipriano Marino was travelling to New York on the *Biskra*. Going to Washington to raise a loan, no doubt. Captain Musker gave Costaragua's political fortunes very little of his attention. He was thinking of the past, and of what might have happened if he had gone into the interior with Dolores instead of to the *Andromeda* and sailing away, never returning until now.

And then, coming into the dining saloon and seeing, beside that dried-up gray-faced little shrimp in his heavily embroidered uniform of olive-green khaki, a magnificent woman, loaded with jewels, fierce and arrogant in her pose, and with the face of Dolores! There was little cause for wonder at his stopping so short, as the observant Mr. De Courcy had related. But he had recovered at once and had taken his seat, with Señora Marino on his left.

There were others at that table, of course, and conversation, after murmured salutations, became general. The captain stole a look at her and saw she was studying him with a frank interested scrutiny. She hadn't changed so much, but he had. He knew that much about himself. Most men of forty-five are unrecognizable by those who have known them twenty-five years before. So are most women.

But Dolores Marino had grown only more solid in texture, more assured and composed in manner. The fierce adorable face was the same under its pearl-powder, saving only the tiny wrinkles around the eyes.

It was usual for interesting women to study Captain Musker. He was used to it. But now he couldn't make up his mind whether she was merely interested, or whether she was interested because the sight of him awoke some dim long-slumbering memory of the past. And he discovered that he had not the courage to make himself known.

He looked at the general. This Cipriano Marino, Dictator of Costaragua, was not a formidable-looking person at first glance, even when seated. He was short, and his dark, tanned face, with its hooked nose, prong-like gray moustaches and high flat cheeks disfigured with depigmented blotches of white skin, inspired the onlooker not so much with fear as with confusion, because his pale eyes, the colour of light beer, were seen blinking behind shell-rimmed glasses. He was so thin, so scraggy in the neck, so despicable in spite of his superb green-and-gold uniform, with the heavy incrustation of embroidered serpents' heads and the plumage of the hyacinthine macaw, the national emblem of Costaragua, on the high collar. And the reason for his insignificance was the powerful and radiating personality of his wife, in whose shadow he seemed to shrink and shiver and meditate some appalling infamy.

Captain Musker withdrew his eyes. Señora Marino was speaking in expressive broken English. The rich husky voice gave the captain a queer sensation. The same! Her superb physique had always enthralled him when he thought of her, and out of it her voice had come in thrilling, vibrating tones to dominate his heart, to hold him for those few days while the *Andromeda* had been held on her rock, and to echo through the caverns of memory. Now

he sat there, very quiet and thoughtful, while Señora Marino, the wife of the Dictator, talked to him of her visit to New York.

Up on the bridge, looking out from beneath the awning upon a star-strewn sea, Dolores Marino sat up in her deck chair and peered at Captain Musker's glowing cigar.

"How do you know my name?" she demanded uncertainly.

"How do I know you worked in the Cantina del Sol?" he replied. "Once I had a fight with you, Dolores, *mi querida*. Have you so many fights with men that you forget the Cantina del Sol?"

"So that was the trouble," she muttered in Spanish. "I wondered where I had seen thee before. It was a long while since I was in the Cantina del Sol. *Por Dios!* Thou art my lover Henriquez! Well!"

Captain Musker knew perfectly what she meant by that last exclamatory sigh. He had left her, climbed aboard the floating *Andromeda*, and sailed away. And now, with the amorous vindictiveness of strong women, she wanted to know what he had to say for himself. In a way, such a woman never forgives a man for a single minute he bestows on the world away from her. Loving or fighting, she demands his heart's blood. Suddenly Dolores flung over the rail the gold-tipped trash she was smoking.

"Give me a *puro*," she demanded brusquely. "I have no fancy for these things."

He passed her a cigar, and her strong teeth bit the end. In the flare of the match he saw her eyes, hard, brilliant and amused. The spark from them suddenly ignited an inflammable charge in his heart, lying there under years of useless lumber as though waiting for this moment to ex-

plode. And it was this, that here without doubt, grown out of the turbulent girl of the Cantina del Sol, was the woman for whom he had been seeking. The match went out, but his heart shook with this detonating discovery.

"The general is a big man, these days," he said, as though thinking aloud.

"He!" She gave a brief laugh.

"Why did you marry that—small person, Dolores?"

"You ask too much, but I will tell thee, my Henriquez. I married him because he could do as he pleased with me or any other woman in Costaragua. At the time of the revolution, when he shut that old bookworm, that gray-bearded *cabro*, Miguel Castovar, in the president's palace and took over the government, he was a man to be feared."

"Castovar was a goat, eh?" said the captain. "What do you call your general?"

"A weasel, a *comadreja*," she laughed.

"Where did the weasel find you, Dolores?"

"My husband was Administrador of the Customs and Minister of Haciendas, if you know what that means," answered Señora Marino.

"It means he was rich," said the captain.

"Very rich. And a peculator. He had bribed himself into the ministry, and of course he took bribes. He was appointed by Castovar."

"Where is he now?" asked Captain Musker with some curiosity.

"I am not sure, but some say he is a waiter in Tegucigalpa across the frontiers. The Dictator took over his offices and made out the divorce papers."

"Like that, eh? Dolores, how you must love your dictator!"

There was a silence at this, and the two cigars glowed.

The captain gained a conviction that she did not love her dictator beyond reason, and he put this conviction into words whispered in her ear.

"He goes to Washington," she said sombrely, "to secure recognition for this new president he has appointed. I shall remain in New York. I have heard of it. Once Umberto, my other husband, took me to Paris. Is New York like Paris, Henriquez?"

"Far better," said Captain Musker. "I shall see you every day while the ship is in port. Do you remember the house behind the palms on the lagoon, Dolores?"

"Why ask me?" she sighed. "I remember it well. I was happy, and you left me as a mule leaves his shoe in the trail."

"Well, and now you are a rich woman, married to a great man."

"He lies on his back and snores like a pig," she remarked calmly. "He has a miserable soul."

"Are you going back to San Benito?" asked the captain.

"He never discloses his plans. But I think he understands that the new president is planning a revolution on the Pacific side, where the people are discontented because the Dictator revoked the concessions for a railway. And he has not left Costaragua without providing for the future, my Henriquez."

"How happy you must be, Dolores, with your dictator!" Captain Musker said softly.

"Listen, my friend," came the thrilling voice at his side. "Do not speak to me like that, or I shall grow angry."

"Grow as angry as you like, Dolores, but don't forget I am in command of this ship, and of you too, for that matter. This is not the Cantina del Sol." And reaching out in the darkness, Captain Musker laid hold of the woman's

firm shoulder. Suddenly he heard her laugh. She bent over and bit his hand.

"Henriquez, thou art the same murderous man! You shall show me New York."

And as the ship sailed north, the idea burned and burned in his brain. He sat at his table, contemplating General Cipriano Marino, absorbed in his Latin moroseness, and wondering that such people existed in the modern world. General Marino knew no English and spoke to no one save the purser, who had communicated to Captain Musker the news that the general had placed in his care several heavy strong-boxes too large for the office safe. They were in the bullion chamber, under seal, he said.

And in the mind of Dolores, a strange piratical mind for a woman, the same idea burned. Only with her the idea took the shape, sharp and clear, of a new life under Northern skies. All her life, which had been of necessity perilous and subjected to the passions of unscrupulous, desperate, and nimble-witted men, blown hither and yon by the winds of war, she had accepted treachery as an integral factor of existence. Captain Musker had loved her and left her; and now, since fate had flung them together again, she deemed it was her turn. To her untutored intelligence, this commander of a huge bright ship was as omnipotent as a general of armies. Her imagination illumined the future with grandiose adventures in the famous city of vast wealth, toward which they were sailing at marvellous speed. With naïve prudence she veiled her designs from Captain Musker, and listened to his words as he told her of his plans.

And to do him justice, Captain Musker contemplated the future with an unusual pleasure. To him Dolores, with her fierce temperament and superb vitality, was a spiritual intoxication. She had that quality in which he de-

lighted beyond measure, a vigorous belligerent personality, uncontaminated with the silly sophistication of so many modern women accustomed to men who are too lazy to pursue them.

So they dreamed each in the way life had inspired them, and so absorbed were they in their dreams they never noticed that General Cipriano Marino was entertaining a dream of his own, a dream born of an insensate jealousy. . . .

Mr. De Courcy again: That very efficient young officer was on the bridge with Mr. Popham, the chief mate, looking out for Hatteras. He knew the captain was not far away. He had been aware, all the voyage up, that the Old Man was spending his time with that spiggotty woman, the wife of the general. He had heard old Drinkwater, the chief steward, tell the doctor that the military party in Suite Seven was going crazy. The electrician, sent to fix a fan, had had a gun poked in his face as he opened the door of Suite Seven. Mr. De Courcy heard a lot on the *Biskra.* He was very discreet. It paid, with Captain Musker, to attend strictly to one's business. The captain never interfered with his officers' affairs.

So that night, Hatteras expected any moment, Mr. De Courcy wasn't at all surprised to discover Captain Musker, in his dress uniform, on the bridge all of a sudden.

"Look at the log, will you," said the captain, and Mr. De Courcy at once hurried along the top deck to where the log extended from a boom on the rail. He had a flashlight in his hand, of course, but he didn't need to see that the two private deck chairs by the Number One boat were both empty. "She's gone down," he said to himself and gave the matter no more attention until General Cipriano Marino stepped out of the shadow of a ventilator with a revolver in his hand. "Looking ugly," said Mr. De Courcy, when

he divulged the matter to Captain Musker later. What he did was in keeping with his alert and competent mind drilled by five years of naval discipline. He turned his flash on the tormented features of the distinguished passenger, who was disconcerted by finding nobody save this sharp youth whom he had never seen before, and who snatched the blue-barrelled revolver out of the hand which wavered uncertainly.

"Look here, old chap, that's not allowed, you know." The thing suddenly described an arc over the rail.

The passenger glared.

"Looking pretty sick about something if you ask me, sir," said Mr. De Courcy to the captain, who hadn't.

Captain Musker, indeed, had made not a single comment upon his junior officer's confidential report of the passenger's sudden aberration in the dark. That was his way. Mr. De Courcy admired the way. He resolved to copy it. Least said, least lied about.

But in spite of his silence, Captain Musker was keenly alive to the significance of General Marino's presence up there on the top deck. It only hardened his determination to see the adventure through. Husbands who were wise behaved differently. The captain was much too clever, and in this case much too alive to his responsibilities, to justify revenge of that nature. He sent the doctor, who understood Spanish, to the general's suite. And he told Dolores Marino exactly what he had heard from Mr. De Courcy. She turned lazily in her chair and regarded him through half-closed eyes.

"My Cipriano is sick—that is true," she said. "Sick with jealousy. Hast thou just discovered that, Henriquez?"

Captain Musker, celebrated for his gallantry, suddenly comprehended that this woman fed on jealousy as some spirits feed on honeydew. He ought to have known she would not take these things in a civilized way. That was

part of her immense lure for him. He experienced a stab of doubt of the outcome. He could not be expected to see how each day's run from Costaragua had diminished the lifelong caution and fear of military force in the breast of Dolores Marino. For her that overdecorated dictator was less than Captain Musker now, and she was unable to understand why the latter should be in awe of her husband at all.

"Why do you not put him in prison?" she demanded.

"Too many questions on arrival," he told her. "The doctor is looking after him. When he goes to Washington——"

"He says he will not go to Washington," she replied. "He said to-night we shall never reach New York."

"And you are not afraid?"

"In San Benito, with his army round him, I would be," she muttered. "I was six months in a fortress, underground, because he thought I had tried to kill him. That was before he married me," she added.

"You! In a prison."

"Well, I did try to kill him," she said simply. "The others were shot."

"Good God!" said Captain Musker to himself. To her he said nothing—only grasped her arm, firm, solid, and powerful.

"Now I know what to do, my Henriquez."

It was time to go. She stood up and went to the rail. Her long black hair was down, and blowing in the cool wind off the shore. With a dexterous movement she rolled it up and secured it. Captain Musker admired long hair. He liked a woman to be a woman. That black mane of hers flying in the night wind was a symbol of her emotion for him. She turned, and in the darkness shot by fugitive gleams re-

flected on the painted deck, he saw her fierce eyes flashing.

"You remember, Henriquez, how I taught you to say *Vaya Usted con Dios?*"

"I remember," he said. "You said it to me, and I went."

"Say it now, then," she muttered, looking down suddenly, "and I will go. And I will see thee in New York."

Mr. De Courcy, just off watch at midnight, tapped at the captain's door. Captain Musker, lying down in his clothes, a single light deep-shaded, said "Come in," and lay there in enigmatic immobility, like an effigy of some crusading knight, hands on his breast, a mysterious presence.

Mr. De Courcy had a communication to make. He had a *flair*, as the French say. While along to see the log again, leaning over the rail to haul it in from the boom, he had seen something, far down, emerge violently from a porthole and fall. Just a few minutes ago.

Captain Musker lay still. His unusually keen hearing had caught the sound of an unfamiliar scrape of feet outside. He waited. Then Mr. De Courcy, wondering, caught the sound. There was a knock at the outer door.

A curt gesture from the captain sent Mr. De Courcy silently into the chart room, closing the door after him. The young man stared at the chart, gleaming like a pool of delicate brilliance under the hooded lamp, and scratched his lip. He was worried by a suspicion whether the little chap from whom he had snatched the revolver and flung it overboard had not been meditating suicide rather than murder. The sight of that amorphous bundle, resisting and clinging for a moment before dropping into the dark water, had upset Mr. De Courcy. What were they saying in there? He suddenly decided to go round and turn in. The secret of success on a ship, he believed, was to mind your own busi-

ness, and he wished to succeed. Mr. De Courcy had had plenty of adventure in the service. Now he wanted a job for life, promotion and superannuation.

But to Captain Musker sitting up and confronting his purser, doctor, and steward, who had come to report the suicide of an important passenger, the problem was not to be escaped by turning in. The Señora Marino was in a state of collapse in the hospital, he was informed. General Cipriano Marino had climbed through the open window and just as his wife entered the room, had plunged into the sea. When was this? asked the captain. That was just the trouble, said the physician. Señora Marino was incoherent with grief. How long it was before she rang for assistance could only be conjectured. They were searching the ship as a matter of form, said the purser, but it seemed useless to discredit an eyewitness. The doctor said the general had been distraught in his manner while being attended that evening.

"Better write a report," said Captain Musker, and the officers retired.

But Captain Musker could not lie down again. It was not so simple as these people imagined. He had a feeling as of waking up half stunned, just after some terrific explosion, wondering where he was and whether he was alive now or in some previous existence. As the great ship vibrated faintly to the thrust of her propellers he seemed to come to the surface again in a world of extraordinary clarity and calm. Captain Musker, celebrated and even envied for his gallantry, seeing what he had let himself in for, suddenly realized also that the past can never come back. Only the joyous buoyancy of youth can enable us to sail through the rapids and maelstroms of a passionate romance.

For him, he reflected, commander of the *Biskra*, twelve

thousand tons, there was no return to the young Harry Musker, second mate of the poor rotten old *Andromeda*, ashore in Puerto Balboa. And yet there was a tremor in his heart as he thought of what he would be giving up, of what that magnificent creature might do if she for a moment suspected him of treachery. He had bade her "Go with God," and she had gone. She had made him promise to come to her in New York; and she would expect him, her lover of old, to come.

And as they came up the channel and he felt the tentacles of the land reaching out to clutch him in the persons of pilots and immigration officials and customs men, he was at a loss. He knew Dolores. When she wanted a man, she got him. She would never understand that he couldn't do anything for her now. This wasn't Costaragua. She would have to go back there, anyhow.

He was pondering the subject when the superintendent entered his cabin.

"Bad thing this, Musker," he said, sitting down and taking a cigar. "Nothing to do with you, though. We'll take it up with Washington, after the inquiry. Now you're for vacation, as you know, and as a rule we'd be keeping you here to look after things until she sails for Egypt. But the *Sonambula* is sailing this afternoon for Liverpool to refit, and you'll take her. Yardley's coming here to relieve you. And you can do what you like for a month on the other side. Wish I was going with you. No, no soda for me. I take it just the way the Scotch make it."

High up in a palatial suite of a hotel like a vast Babylonian tower, from whose windows could be seen the great curves of the bridges and the lights of ships going down the rivers to the sea, Dolores Marino lay on a gilt and crimson lounge and gazed out upon this monstrous and

gorgeous city of light, so different from the chill and sombre silence of San Benito. She lay there in a mood of calm content and anticipation, regretting nothing and unwitting of the future. She lay there with an occasional glance at the gold clock on the table beside her, waiting for Captain Musker, who at that moment, as the *Sonambula* sailed eastward, was staring reflectively toward the lights of the pleasure harbours on Fire Island and the distant glare of the great city.

CAPTAIN MUSKER'S VACATION

THE *Sonambula,* bound east for overhauling and the modernizing of her accommodation, had a slender passenger list. Her baroque and rococo red-and-gold dining saloon, soon to be changed to a delicate gray Adam interior, contained a mere sprinkling of men and no women. They were the overflow from the regular Atlantic bookings. It was true that two ladies were on the list, but neither of them had been seen since leaving New York. One, a Mrs. Stanford, was an elderly invalid and required a stewardess in constant attendance. Mr. Wigmore, the chief steward, didn't know what to do about the other one.

Even with a reduced crew there was very little to keep Mr. Wigmore's staff employed. When a ship is going to have her inside torn out, when the brass work, linoleum, carpets, curtains, panelling, and electric fittings are to be sold as junk to the dock-side speculators, it makes no difference whether she arrives in good shape or not, in the opinion of the glory hole. Mr. Wigmore and his second in command were unable to combat a subtle atmosphere abroad in the ship that with a relieving skipper topside, a skipper who was going home on vacation, who very likely regarded this trip from New York to Liverpool as part of his vacation, nothing terrible would happen if they loafed a little.

Mr. Vokes, the regular purser of the *Sonambula* these days, strongly disapproved. Mr. Vokes, being an accountant by training and a bureaucrat by nature, was impatient with the weaknesses of the lower ranks on a ship. The celerity with which they spent their money in foreign ports,

the unpleasant spectacles they presented when coming on board at some unearthly hour, were repugnant to Mr. Vokes. His cabin was just by the gangway entrance, and he left his door open at night for air. He heard remarks, uttered by intoxicated oilers and scullions, derogatory to himself, the other officers, and the ship. It was bad enough on the regular voyage, with plenty of work. On this voyage for refitting they began to get out of hand at once. Mr. Wigmore metaphorically wrung his hands in the purser's office.

"Logging them's no good," said Vokes, examining his carefully manicured nails. "What do they care about losing a day's pay here or there? It's only six days to Liverpool. You'll have to wait until they've drunk all the stuff they brought on board."

"It isn't only booze," worried Wigmore. Mr. Wigmore was always on the brink of worrying if not actually at it. He had for fifteen years worried his way from dish washer to a chief stewardship in the Afro-Iberian Mail, and he had the air of expecting to be fired without a reference at any moment. "It isn't only the booze. There's a jane in number seventy-two . . ."

Mr. Vokes glanced perfunctorily at the list under his elbow. It was a short one. He knew who was in seventy-two. The list stated that she was Doris Harringay, married, housewife, aged twenty-seven, domiciled in New York City, and a through passenger to Paris, France. An American citizen. He had seen her for a moment. Very young-looking. Red lips. Vokes did not care for the over-painted type. He had many virtues, but tolerance towards what he didn't like was not one of them. He looked at Wigmore, his patrician lips beginning to curl at the prospect of some vulgar complication.

"Really?" he said.

"Yes," said Wigmore. "I happened to go along the alleyway myself, and one of my men, Slingsby, was just slipping out."

Vokes looked at another list lying on his desk. Martin Slingsby, cabin steward. He knew the blighter. Had been an officer in the war. Temporary gentleman, permanent nuisance. Slipping out of lady passengers' rooms . . . Vokes was depressed.

"What time was this?" he demanded irritably.

"Before breakfast," mumbled Wigmore. He looked very worried.

"I should disrate Slingsby," suggested Vokes severely, "but if you can't find an excuse to speak to Number Seventy-two, I should advise you to let the Old Man know."

Vokes made a wry face as he uttered this valuable counsel. He had no intention of following it himself. He hoped and prayed nothing would make it necessary for him to go up to see this Old Man. He had been annoyed, distinctly, when the news spread round the ship that Captain Musker was taking the *Sonambula* home. Good Lord!

Vokes was simply and elementally scared of Captain Musker. To him it was grotesque that people stood for such a man. It was a mystery why the company permitted him to hold a command. More than once, on the *Biskra,* when Vokes was purser there, he would have sworn they were going to have an explosion on arrival. To the correct, conventional Vokes, the captain was a buccaneer of the promenade deck. If he, Vokes, took a fancy to a lady passenger and showed her extra attention, sure as fate that tall powerfully featured blighter upstairs would spot it and have the girl shifted to his table, take her ashore, dine her in his cabin, and keep her up till midnight on his own

private deck telling her stories of the world, the flesh, and the devil. The exasperating thing about these abductions was that the girls liked it. They would tell Vokes on arriving in New York that they had had the time of their lives. They would thank him ecstatically for introducing them to that darling captain.

Introduce them, by Jove! There were precious few women Captain Musker was waiting to be introduced to. He was there, established on the ground floor, while the Vokeses and other underlings were asking the number of the street. And he was married, with a wife and five children in Liverpool! Vokes knew that well enough. Everybody knew it. If anybody didn't know it, Captain Musker would probably inform them. It was astounding, the frank effrontery of that man. It was his custom, when carrying on one of his love affairs with a cruise passenger, to tell her that his wife did not understand him. Statistics show that a very high percentage of lady cruise passengers accepted this statement without referring it to Mrs. Musker.

Vokes, moreover, had always been aware of a certain amused animosity in Captain Musker's attitude towards himself. He had detected a distinct fondness in the captain for misinterpreting his purser's delicate and chivalrous attentions to various nice girls. Those nice girls had evidently been inoculated with some kind of conversational poison during their seclusion in Captain Musker's suite upstairs. It was almost as though they had been warned against Vokes as a dissolute and unscrupulous reprobate! He had nothing definite to go on, Vokes hadn't, but he was morally certain Captain Musker took advantage of his position to traduce his chief purser's character. It was a relief to be shifted over to the *Sonambula* where Captain

Yardley, a thorough gentleman, never interfered with the promenade deck.

And now here was Captain Musker on the *Sonambula* and a prospect of trouble heaving over the horizon.

Strange to say, Vokes was not thinking about the lady passengers as he listened to Mr. Wigmore's complaints. He was not the man to think "on his feet," as they say. Vokes, indeed, was one of those men who, in the genuine sense of the word, do not think at all. Their minds run on narrow-gauge tracks which have been built by other men. What Vokes thought had been settled long ago by others. He knew his job and obeyed the rules. He believed that he was a gentleman and followed the conventional behaviour of those animals. Vokes never actually laid it down as a demonstrable proposition, but he had an uneasy feeling that the man who thought things out for himself and acted on his own initiative must be a bit of a bounder. He was absolutely convinced Captain Musker was one of these undesirable persons.

Mr. Wigmore, who knew Captain Musker more by reputation than actual contact, looked woebegone at Mr. Vokes's suggestion. Even Vokes himself was able to see the irony of complaining to the celebrated Captain Musker about the behaviour of a lady passenger. It was like bringing coals to Newcastle, you might say. Besides, he might not take it right. He was not one of the blustering sort of commanders, but he had a faculty for talking in a low sarcastic monotone which caused the victim to come downstairs feeling as if he had been skinned and rubbed with red pepper. One of his chief engineers had told his crowd the Old Man "had the bitterest tongue in the company," and when one of his juniors had inquired incredulously if it was bitterer than the chief's own, that junior had been

invited in a loud voice to go on the carpet and see for himself.

"Disrating him will be more trouble than it's worth," said Wigmore. He was a little bit of a chap, efficient in a faithful-dog fashion, economical, and without an idea in the world beyond his job. Vokes had the same feeling about disrating, but he thought Wigmore might take a little of the burden on his own shoulders.

"Well, what *are* you going to do?" he snapped.

Wigmore flicked the ash off his cigarette in a despondent mood.

"It's Seventy-two that's the trouble," he muttered, "not my man. I admit he's a bit of a misfit. He ought to be in your department."

"Thanks," said Vokes acidly.

"It's a fact, he was in an office before the war."

"Let's keep to the point," said Vokes, dashing a sheet of paper into a typewriter with a carriage about four feet wide. "Do you want me to interview the lady?" And he executed a rapid machine-gun performance on the keys. Vokes was annoyed. He was letting Wigmore see it, and Wigmore decided to see the Old Man.

All this time, twenty-four hours, since leaving the pier in the North River, nobody had seen anything either of Mrs. Harringay or Captain Musker. It might have struck Vokes as a sinister coincidence that they were both in seclusion. Mr. Wigmore, ascending to the bridge, where Captain Musker lived in solitary grandeur, was too worried to think of such a thing. He too regretted the affable and debonair Captain Yardley. Yardley had his pleasant way with the ladies too, but he hadn't Captain Musker's fame. Yardley was a bachelor, and for some reason he suspected lady passengers of trying to get him into a compromising

predicament which would result in his compulsory resignation. He believed in the safety of numbers, and had earned the reputation of being a thorough ladies' man because of his parties. They enjoyed themselves, but they were not the sort of women over whom Captain Musker would have wasted five minutes. Vokes was often among those present —charming girls, just his style. And Yardley a splendid chap. Wigmore would get an order to arrange a special dinner. Ice cream in a complimentary shape in honour of the lady guest of the evening. Vokes would be commissioned to get some anniversary date out of one of them, and the dinner would be a surprise.

Captain Musker, Wigmore reflected, was known for other kinds of surprises. He knocked at the door of the cabin and presently heard a low murmur commanding him to come in.

Captain Musker was lying down on his settee in a darkened cabin. He was out of sight of the entrance to the suite, but a wardrobe door, which was a mirror as well, was partially open at such an angle that the captain, by glancing across the room, could see, without being seen, whoever came in. He was not particularly eager to see anybody. He had lost his head, or rather Dolores Fuenmayor had lost hers, and had nearly let him in for the explosion Vokes had been expecting for years. Captain Harry Musker, emotional freebooter, had nearly been scuttled and sunk. It was the strong wine of an old romance.

Now he was coming back to normalcy. He was inclined to regard the week's run eastward as part of his vacation. It was Yardley's ship; Yardley, the ladies' man; and what suited Yardley would do for the *Sonambula* until she docked in the Mersey. Captain Musker was due for a month at Sefton Park, with his wife and five children. Anyone who knew him intimately, if such a person existed,

would have cackled heartlessly at the very notion of such a vacation.

The shock of that meeting with Dolores after all these years had reminded him he was not a young man any more. Forty-seven. The trouble was, he felt as young as ever. His contempt for such men as that fellow Vokes, for example, arose from his conviction that although he was close to the half century he was more alive, more interesting to women, than Vokes ever was or ever would be. Half the men passengers he carried, he reflected, were only half alive. They were rich and, to a certain extent, intelligent, if you stuck to some stereotyped form of information. But he never blamed those quick, brilliant, beautiful women for becoming bored with such men. No vitality. You could feel it. They led the lives of grubs burrowing in filing cabinets.

He had not even looked down the passenger list since leaving. He had not left the bridge deck. He was going home on vacation. It struck him that it was time he made a change in his life. After all, he was getting along. It was a good chance to taper off, as they said. A week's voyage and a domestic hearth awaiting him. He was not sure whether he liked the idea very much after all. He had been away for two years, and so long as he remained in his profession he could hardly fail to feel a stranger in his wife's home.

And then Mr. Wigmore, looking worried, appeared on the mirror of the wardrobe door, and Captain Musker waited for him to speak.

He always did that. It was one of Vokes's reasons for disliking him. He never gave a man any assistance towards an explanation. And now he was not only silent but almost invisible—a mere shape in the shuttered dusk of the sleeping room. It worried Mr. Wigmore. He had been ordered to come in, and he was in. He thought the captain might

look at him anyhow. But as his eyes became accustomed to the half light he saw Captain Musker lying on his settee, his hands under his head, looking up at the reflection of the sun on the sea, which was being reproduced in a swiftly moving green and gold pattern on the ceiling. He was apparently unaffected by Mr. Wigmore's presence. He seemed to be studying that strange pattern which had filtered through the louvered shutters of his window.

Suddenly he said in a clear tone:

"Well?"

Mr. Wigmore, as though a spring had released his faculties, stepped into the sleeping room, laid a hand on the empty bed place and informed Captain Musker that he was having trouble with the men, and that he was afraid the passenger in Number Seventy-two was not keeping the stewards in their place.

"I thought that was your job," said Captain Musker.

No doubt, agreed Mr. Wigmore, studying the carpet; but it would be easier if the passenger in Number Seventy-two kept her place, if Captain Musker preferred it that way.

On hearing this the captain swung his feet to the floor and rose. He glanced at Mr. Wigmore as he passed into the sitting room. They had been in the same service a long time now. Captain Musker knew Wigmore was all right. And he had no intention of letting the crew get away with any hanky-panky because he was strange to the ship. In fact he welcomed a little insubordination. As for Number Seventy-two, he picked up the passenger list on his desk. H-m. Mrs. Doris Harringay, of New York City, for Paris, France.

Captain Musker glanced down the names. Only two lady passengers.

"Mrs. Stanford is an invalid," said Mr. Wigmore.

"And Mrs. Harringay is strong and active, eh? Well, to-morrow I'll take inspection. Who's at my table?"

"No one, sir. I told the head waiter to hold it until he heard from you."

"Put Mrs. Harringay at my table. Set one of the small ones. Have two other passengers, if they are agreeable. What's she like, this Mrs. Harringay?"

Mr. Wigmore rubbed his chin with the back of his forefinger.

"She seemed to me one of these quiet ones!" he remarked inadequately.

"So I should say if she's permitting familiarities from the cabin stewards. Has she a seat in the saloon?"

"Well, she hasn't used it yet, sir. She's been having her meals in her room, and what with Miss Grahame being busy with Number Ninety-seven so much——"

"Put her at my table," said Captain Musker. "I'll write a note."

He sat down and scribbled on a card that Captain Musker requested the honour of Mrs. Harringay's company at dinner at his table that evening at seven o'clock. He put it in an envelope and gave it to Mr. Wigmore.

In spite of his tart comment the captain knew what Mr. Wigmore had in mind when he said Mrs. Harringay was one of the quiet ones. Probably never been on a ship before. So many of them, he reflected, had suffered shipwreck ashore before he had the pleasure of meeting them on the ocean. She probably thought the cabin stewards, being in uniform, were officers. It would be his duty and his recreation to give her a few pointers on the subject.

He was going home on vacation, and from the bridge of the *Sonambula* the prospect of a month in Sefton Park was depressing enough. It occurred to him that he had

enough put by to take a trip to London. In spite of the five children—Janet, the eldest, must be fifteen—Mrs. Musker saved out of the two-thirds pay she received each month. A thrifty Lancashire lass, Janet Musker. A man would go a long way before he would find a more capable wife and mother. And yet, Captain Musker reflected as he dressed for dinner, they had precious little in common. She had no thoughts for anything outside of her house and children. Her women friends, captains' wives like herself, kept out of the way during Captain Musker's infrequent sojourns in the house in Sefton Park. She had a way of regarding the children as her own property. She reared them with a hard, unsmiling solicitude. And her system would have been perfect but for one thing. The children were growing up. As he put down the stiff military hair brushes and started for the elevator, Captain Musker, alert, vigorous, and predatory, with sport ahead, side-stepped the sudden realization of this. His children were growing up. He was enough of a conventional Englishman to feel the solemnity of the thought.

Reaching "C" Deck, the captain astonished the elevator boy by telling him to stop. He got out and began to walk along the starboard alleyway, which contained the even numbers, until he reached Seventy-two. There was no one about. All the passengers were down in the saloon on "E" Deck. He knocked at the door.

For a moment even Captain Musker's acute hearing could detect no movement within. He heard the steady murmur of the turbines, the local hum of the electric fans, the slam of a far-off door in the second class aft. And then the handle of Seventy-two began to turn slowly. The door opened an inch, and a plucked eyebrow, a brown eye, and blonde hair cut square across a very white forehead became

visible. Captain Musker permitted his severe features to relax slightly.

"Are you ready for dinner, Mrs. Harringay?" he asked.

The small blonde head was seen to shake slightly, and the eye became lively.

"Shall I wait?" he asked.

"I—I shan't be a minute. You—you can come in," she said, opening the door. Captain Musker shook his head.

Mrs. Harringay no doubt considered herself dressed for dinner. Such a phrase is purely comparative. Captain Musker thought he had seen all there was to be seen in the way of dinner gowns. Mrs. Harringay showed him his mistake. She also showed him her knees, most of her back, and her arms, neck, and bosom. She was one of those very slender girls who are by no means thin. She had smooth-polished contours which reminded one neither of a woman nor of a girl, but of some ageless and not entirely respectable immortal. Her moss-green dress set off her blonde head and soft brown eyes. On the head she wore a broad green fillet, which gave her, in some subtle way, the appearance of a beautiful creature prepared for sacrifice. There was a string of fat gold beads accentuating the whiteness of her throat, and on one ankle she had a platinum chain with a jade ball. She stood there smiling with her small lips painted so heavily they looked black in the electric light, and Captain Musker, broad and imposing in his stiff shirt-front and gold-laced sleeves, stood shaking his head.

"No, I never go into cabins," he told her easily, smiling at the instinctive pout of her lips. Mrs. Harringay, he discovered, pouted whenever she failed to get what she wanted. "I'll wait for you at the elevator."

"I—I'll be right along," she said, opening her eyes round and full suddenly and then returning them to their ordinary range.

She did not keep him waiting. He suspected she had been ready some time before he knocked. As they went down in the elevator he remembered her age on the passenger list was twenty-seven. She looked, now, seventeen. When he began to draw her into conversation he wondered whether she was more than seven.

What some of the older and staider passengers thought of that apparition will never be clearly established. Many of them imagined that the captain had his wife with him, and Mrs. Harringay's appearance gave them a sudden shock. The two business men who had been invited to join the captain became self-conscious. Captain Musker made the introductions after Mr. Wigmore had presented them to him. But it happened that they were already halfway through their dinner, and soon Captain Musker had Mrs. Harringay to himself.

He discovered that her slight stutter and her habit of opening her eyes very wide for a moment, were parts of a complicated technique. She had the air of being very embarrassed and abstracted and yet at the same time working unceasingly to impose her femininity upon him. It was like watching ivy beginning to cling, he thought, amazed. She didn't know she was doing it, and yet she revealed an instinctive intelligence, just as the ivy seems to know what walls are suitable for clinging. He found tiny tendrils of appeal in voice and gesture reaching out to get a hold upon himself.

"This your first trip over?" he asked, handing her the olives.

"Yes, and I need a friend to advise me so much. I've never been on a boat before."

Captain Musker winced at hearing the *Sonambula* called a boat, but he didn't hold that against Mrs. Harringay.

The wisest and loveliest of her sex did the same. It made him want to throw them overboard.

"What do you want a friend for?" he asked. "I should have thought you'd have no difficulty about that, Mrs. Harringay."

"I don't know what you mean," she said. He found out before dinner was over that the phrase was part of her technique. It was accompanied by a glance that was incredibly daring and provocative. "I don't suppose I'm the first American girl to visit Paris."

"No," he agreed. "Are you making a long stay?"

She looked round at the row of waiters standing rigidly by the buffet.

"I'm supposed to meet my husband there," she whispered. "He's on the French boat that sailed last week."

"Then it's the usual thing, Mrs. Harringay?"

"I can't explain here," she said with a look that made him imagine her going down for the third time. "Can't I see you some place on the boat?"

"I dare say it can be managed, Mrs. Harringay, if you particularly wish it."

"I tell you what I wish. I wish you wouldn't Mrs. Harringay me. My name's Doris. Don't you like it?"

"Wouldn't you object?" he inquired. "From a stranger?"

"I think you're perfectly wonderful," she breathed, reaching for an olive. He noticed how slimly small and soft her hand was. Like a tendril as it closed on the green fruit. Small sharp white teeth did their work. She was very attractive in a swooning, sensuous way. Slender, soft white hands. He remembered a musical comedy song of long ago. "Two Little Soft White Hands." It struck him Doris Harringay's hands might be very strong, too, if they had hold of a man's heart, or throat, or pocketbook.

It was a novel experience for him. He was having his own methods turned against himself. Mrs. Harringay's speed made him seem very much like a glacier—as cold and as slow. She allowed her hand to touch his and gave it a sudden warm pressure.

"Be careful," he warned. "All these people will misunderstand. You mustn't do that."

She gazed at him with wide stricken eyes.

"I thought you wanted me to," she said in an almost voiceless tone, and he felt himself assailed by an unusual helplessness. He had wanted her to, for an insane moment. It did not improve his temper to discover that she knew it. He made a joke of it.

"You must be a mind reader," he said.

Her eyes opened wide for a moment.

"Do you believe in it? It's fate, I guess," she said. He thought of her phrase—"I don't know what you mean"—and nearly repeated it. She went on, in a confidential whisper:

"That was one of the principal reasons why we couldn't go on."

"Tell me," he said. He had no idea what she was driving at. He was thinking of the phrase people were constantly using nowadays—sex appeal. He'd never seen anything like this. She was nothing else, apparently.

"Tell me," he repeated, and even to that brief command she seemed to sway towards him like an odalisque.

"Isn't there some place on the boat . . . ?" she asked, looking round. "I couldn't here."

"We'll go up on deck when we've finished," he answered.

The elevator took them to the bridge deck, where the lifeboats showed ghostly white in the windy darkness.

It was a new and incomprehensible world up there for Mrs. Harringay, full of strange noises; the hum of the

funnel guys in the wind, the roar of the squadrons of ventilating fans in their open-throated cowls, the crackling hiss and spat of the wireless and the deep resonant vibrations of the turbines. She gave a faint shriek and clung to him as they stepped out upon the deck.

"There's nothing to be afraid of," he said. His arm went round her instinctively.

"Oh, I'm scared!" she said, clinging close to him. Her face was lifted in supplication. "I'll fall off, I'll fall off." She melted into his arms.

"Better come inside, then," he said presently. They went into his suite, and he put her into a big armchair while he opened his cigar box.

When he turned she was taking a thin enamel case from her bag and selecting a black cigarette with a silver tip. She smiled.

"I'm not supposed to smoke, but I just know I can trust you," she said, leaning forward for the match. "It soothes my nerves. I've got very jumpy nerves. Are those your lady friends over there?"

Captain Musker dropped the match in an ash tray and looked round at the pictures he had set up on his desk. He nodded.

"You like the good-lookers, I notice."

"You must have learned a lot about that mind reading," he remarked.

"Now you're going subtle on me," she complained. "You mustn't laugh at poor little me. If you knew the comfort it gives a girl! And you can't deny it to me! All this," she waved her cigarette, "and you, was foretold to me."

"No!" he said.

"Yes. The professional lady consulted the stars." She made a gesture to show Captain Musker the position of the stars in the universe. "I was to make a journey to a foreign

land and a tall man, an officer, would come into my life."

"Tell me," he said, his hand on the electric bell push. "Would you like a liqueur?"

"I'm not supposed to drink," she said.

"You can trust me again," he suggested. They looked at each other for a moment, lost in a no-man's land of obscure desires. When the waiter came he said:

"Benedictine or chartreuse?"

"Oh, if they have it, I'll take some of that white funny-smelling stuff. You know what I mean. With a name like a perfume."

"You mean Kümmel?" he said. She nodded in complete satisfaction and blew a perfect smoke ring, strongly impregnated with chypre.

After all, reflected Captain Musker, what did it matter to her? What signified any compunctions he might have with regard to her future? She hadn't any herself. She seemed to have the immunity of custom, just as villagers in India can drink sewage and yet not die. Behind his appreciation of the sport of gallantry, to which he had been addicted, there lay a feeling of astonishment at the modern girl. Mrs. Harringay was not the kind of girl he took an interest in, as a rule. It made him too conspicuous on a crowded, critical ship. On a cruise it invariably transpired that such flapperish young persons merged into skylarking groups in the palm court, where they played ukuleles and saxophones to the scandal of the other passengers. Captain Musker left them to it.

But he was unaware of any scruples concerning Mrs. Harringay. She was so sure of herself beneath her sham timidity and clinging-vine technique. Out there, on deck, he had become aware of the perfection of that technique.

"Go on," he said as she put the glass of Kümmel down half empty. She licked her red lips.

"I guess I seem awful dumb to you," she said, staring at the photographs on the desk. "I'll explain if you want." He nodded.

"You'll think I'm crazy, I guess," she said. "I've had a terrible time since I was married, and I couldn't go on with it any more. It was a mistake. But it's no use going over that again."

She looked sideways at the opening which led into the captain's sleeping place, as though some shadowy person were in there pointing an accusing finger at her. The captain studied her as she seemed to be listening to the invisible shade's inaudible comments. He wondered for an instant whether she were one of these dopey women whom despairing physicians send away "for a change of scene." Which meant an opportunity to buy drugs from cabin stewards, he reflected grimly. But Mrs. Harringay hadn't the symptoms. She used other forms of emotional stimulation.

"What was the trouble?" he asked. He was a husband himself, and he had found that a wife, in discussing her husband's faults, gave herself the benefit of the doubt.

"It was mental anguish," she said. "He's in business and travels all over. Used to leave me for weeks. And then come home unexpectedly, to see what I was doing."

Captain Musker thought Mr. Harringay must be a very unintelligent person if he had any doubt what Mrs. Harringay was doing. He laughed.

"I don't know what you mean," she said, looking at her slender crossed legs. "He was always making fun of my beliefs."

Captain Musker waited to hear about this. He was fascinated by Doris Harringay. Women like her rarely got as far as the New York piers. They did their stuff at the county seat, and then went by train to Canada or Cuba, for some reason.

"He'd take my books and pitch them into the garbage can," she said.

"What sort of books? Daring books?"

"Oh, no! Books on the future. Astrology, like I was telling you." She looked sideways into the darkened room again. "Even if he didn't believe in it, he needn't have got rough." She turned to the captain. "He hit me, once," she whispered. "Haven't you ever studied astrology?"

Captain Musker, over the edge of his glass, which contained ginger ale and not, as Mrs. Harringay imagined, whiskey, shook his head.

"Is it interesting?"

"Wonderful!" Her face became illumined. Something in the stuff she had read had reached her soul. "It works out—your destiny. I used to take lessons from a professional lady."

"What did she tell you?"

"It was wonderful how it worked out. But you don't believe in it."

"How do you know I don't believe in it?"

"Easy. The way you look!" she smiled.

"What did she say?" he asked.

"She said an officer would come into my life. She described someone just like you, only you haven't a moustache. Perhaps you've shaved it off."

"That must be it. And she said you'd go on a voyage?"

"Yes—I remember because it was the day I'd been down to get my passport."

Captain Musker was unable to resist the conviction that the professional lady had seen the passport in Mrs. Harringay's bag.

"Does she ask for the money first?" he inquired.

"Yes, always. She says she gets a psychic reaction from holding it, and it helps her to see the fate of the last owner."

"That's reasonable," he admitted. He had carried a famous fortune teller, and he could well believe Mrs. Harringay.

"And so you are going to Paris," he said. She seemed suffused with gratification that she was achieving her ambition. He wondered whether she had to pout very much, as she did when he said she ought to go down and take a walk on the promenade deck before going to her cabin.

"Can't we walk out there?" she asked. "I'm so dumb with strangers."

As they walked to and fro among the cowls in the darkness he held her arm to steady her. It was warm and seductive under his fingers. As they came into the shelter of the bridge structure she put her arms round his neck closely and with a sort of calculated desperation.

"Be my friend," she said hoarsely. "I'm scared of what's to come. My friends, they've left me cold. Can't you—in Paris? Please!"

Mr. Vokes, complacent over the way things were shaping, was nevertheless astonished at the capitulation of Captain Musker to that Mrs. Harringay. He hadn't expected the commander to take any interest in her. For Vokes, Mrs. Harringay's enchantments were poison. He disliked her on principle. She was not included, in his mind, with what he called "the ladies." But when Wigmore, who had been gaping through the glass doors of the saloon entrance during meals, tried to draw the purser into a discussion of the Old Man, Vokes shut him up. The crew, after one or two short, sharp interviews with the commander, had decided to do a little work. Wigmore might realize when he was well off.

"My advice is, dry up, Wigmore," he said, picking up his

copy of the *Weekly Times*. Mr. Vokes objected to American newspapers on the grounds of their headlines. Wigmore took himself off to the second steward's cabin.

"She's takin' up palmistry, now," that observant gentleman reported. "Up on the promenade deck. Tells their fortunes from their palms. I'll bet a banana to a beetroot there's a few lines on her palm."

"It passes the time," said Wigmore. "Was the Old Man there?"

"He was. Went away, though. But she runs all over the top deck, Chief."

"We'll be in on Thursday," said Wigmore. "These things don't worry the Old Man. He'll be going to see his missis."

"Five children, they tell me," said the second. "It's a crime."

"You've got four, and you're no shrinking violet yourself when there's a skirt about," said Mr. Wigmore, much amused.

It was true, as the second steward had said, Mrs. Harringay had aroused interest with her proficiency in telling fortunes from palms. It requires small talent to amuse a small company of passengers on a large ship. They welcome anything to relieve the boredom between meals.

But over Captain Musker's hand she pored with a fascinated delight. It showed, she said, such wonderful things. With her own long sharp pink forenail she traced out for him his destiny. He watched her hands, wondering at the smallness of them and the perfection of her tendril-like fingers. She disturbed him. He began to be afraid. He tried to remember the resolutions he had been making when safely out of reach of Dolores Fuenmayor.

"What's that? What does it say?" he asked.

"It says your life will cross that of a very young woman," she told him. She gave a faint pout and laid a finger on her brow.

"That must be you," he said.

"Me? I don't know what you mean. I'm twenty-four. Let me look again."

"As much as that? Nobody will ever believe it," he murmured, thinking of the immutable record of the passenger list. But he did not blame her. He was forty-seven himself and he was already trying to think of his age as forty-or-so. Three years from fifty . . . It was as incredible as Mrs. Harringay's twenty-seven.

More so!

And it was while she was lying in a deck chair, with closed eyes, up on the boat deck near his quarters, that a thought came to the surface of his mind and remained there, ominous and immovable. She looked like a kid, with her eyes closed, a kid of fifteen or so. And the thought was this: that he had need to look out, not for her, but for himself. He was nearing that imaginary yet real line which cuts the lives of men into two parts. He would have to leave Mrs. Harringay when he crossed that line. He would have to leave all those interesting and perilous women he had known. Was that what the lines on his hand meant when she said a very young woman would come into his life? He pulled a wry face. Hell, no! he thought. He wasn't going in for that sort of thing. He wanted to keep on regarding Mrs. Harringay as a clever, unscrupulous little vamp, trying to drag him into her affairs on her way to Paris. He wanted to feel that she deserved all that was coming to her. But he was unable to rid himself of the feeling that he was approaching a crisis in his life, a crisis in which he would have to look after himself.

As they neared Liverpool she spoke more and more of

seeing him in Paris. She had found out that he was going on vacation, that he was married, and that his wife did not understand him. She got it into her head that Captain Musker's home port was New York, and from that moment she became placidly possessive. For a time she forgot why she was travelling. Her elastic agile mentality leaped forward to a fresh emotional experience. Only on arrival did she come back to the immediate future and assume a jaunty post to conceal her alarm.

"I'll come to Paris," he said suddenly the last night, in the Irish Sea. He had remained silent up to this moment.

She looked at him and smiled. On her lap lay a "French in Ten Weeks." She opened it and found a phrase.

"*Je t'aime,*" she said stumblingly. "I bet you don't know what that means."

"Now—now," said he, shaking his finger.

"Here's another," she insisted, looking at the book. "I've been studying while you were up on your old bridge. *Donnez-moi un baiser.*"

He told her that when they docked she wouldn't see him any more. Somebody, he remarked, might come down.

"Your wife?"

"No, she won't come down. She never comes near the docks. Other people, officials, newspaper reporters. I'll see you when you go ashore."

"And you'll come to Paris?" she said.

"I said so," he replied, gazing at her with a sort of unseeing stare. Would he go to Paris? Did he want to see this girl again? She was young and yet she was so old. So foolish and so cunning, so childish and so experienced. She knew nothing except that she was desirable and that men were easy. She would go on and on, drawing vitality from the world of men, and he himself would be but a dim memory. She had shown him a picture of her husband,

who "wanted to give her a fair deal." She would always get that, he thought. She was that sort.

But in the meanwhile what was he going to do? That Dolores Fuenmayor had shaken him. Women were implacable in going after what they wanted. It was an instinct with them. He had been shaken. He had to watch out for himself. Captain Musker had always been very careful to avoid the character of a Jack ashore. What he wanted was something a little better than that. And now the something he wanted was changing as he approached the line we all have to pass—the line of the half century. He wanted youth as strongly as ever, but not youth as Mrs. Harringay understood it. What was it, he asked himself as he stood by the pilot, and the *Sonambula* moved up the Mersey?

Here were the old landmarks! The fort at New Brighton, the high tower, the Royal Liver Building, the pleasant houses of Liscard and Seacombe. Here his children played on the beach. But they were growing up. He frowned.

The *Sonambula* was to go straight to the landing stage. As they drew near and the short gruff toots of the steamer's siren alternated with the answering barks of the tugs, Captain Musker looked down upon the group on the stage. The public was outside. There were the port captain, the superintendent, and various other officials. There was also a girl with them. Captain Musker's eye was caught by that gallant carriage and sturdy youthfulness. She had a red hat, like a gay little oriflamme, showing that already she was in the field. He raised his binoculars. She was speaking to old Kirk, the port engineer. Now she looked up, and waved a slim gloved hand.

Captain Musker had a queer feeling. He put his glasses down and looked at the pilot. Then he busied himself looking over the side. He wondered if anybody had noticed a change in him at that moment. He felt it himself.

When the gangway was drawn up and made fast, the passengers were in the saloon having their passports stamped. Captain Musker was down at the gangway. The little group passed up and on board. He shook hands with his superiors in a hurried perfunctory way. The girl in the red hat was coming. Mr. Kirk made a joke at the captain's expense, but it was not heard, in spite of Captain Musker's acute hearing.

The girl came on board and stood there looking at him, gravely smiling, sturdy, well-grown, with a promise of exquisite maternal beauty in the future. The officials went on up to the captain's quarters.

"Father!" said the girl. She turned with a sudden movement to look at Mrs. Harringay, who was coming up to Captain Musker.

"Well, lass," he said. "You've grown." And he kissed her. He turned to Mrs. Harringay.

"This is Janet," he said. "She's coming on vacation with me. My daughter. Janet, would you like to go to Paris?"

"Oh, Father!"

"Mrs. Harringay's going to Paris," he said. Then he turned to Doris Harringay. "You were right after all," he told her.

"I don't know what you mean," she pouted. She was looking at Janet.

"Don't you remember?" said the captain. "You said my hand showed a young woman would come into my life. I wondered what you meant. Here she is." He put his arm round Janet.

"All well at home, lass?" he said.

THE VANISHED PASSENGER

YES, this is almost the only time I get a breath of fresh air. They don't mind my sitting here, either. Gives the Palm Court a homelike air, they think, to have a stewardess in one of the rockers, doing a little mending. And if you can make a Palm Court homelike you must be a domestic wonder. Well, it's out of the wind, anyhow, and you've no idea how a girl craves to *sit down*. This standing in uniform around the entrance hall is enough to make a human being quit the game altogether. . . .

"Oh, yes, of course we have queer passengers from time to time. . . . What's that you say? Well, you can't ever tell. There was two girls last trip. The chief—he's a friend of mine—I often go up and spend the evening with him and his wife in Harlem when we're in port—he simply wouldn't believe me when I told him they were cheap skates. It came out they'd won a prize for getting the largest number of new subscribers for the paper in their town. The prize was a trip on our cruisers. Six Weeks of Bliss on the Bounding Blue—you know how they exaggerate these things. They were in one of my rooms. You wouldn't believe me if I told you! Doing their laundry in the basin and sticking their handkerchiefs and underwear on the wardrobe mirror to dry them. Holes burnt in the sheets with cigarettes they'd dropped! And as for getting any money out of them—humph! One of them came to me to press a skirt, and I did it. It's my work. But not for nothing. Would you believe, they broke their fan, and when the electrician came to fix it they vamped him into putting a connection on the wall that would fit their cheap little electric

iron? Yes, that was their line! Up on the promenade deck or in the smoking room they looked like a million dollars, and all the men were round them like flies round honey. Men do make me sick sometimes, and that's a fact. I see the nicest girls left as though they had measles, while some brazen, pug-nosed little rip will be asking the men to stand back so she can get some air! . . .

"I knew you'd ask that! Passengers like you always do. I expect it nowadays. I get scared sometimes when you people say I'm so refined and how did I ever come to take up a job like this? Because it makes me feel inefficient! I try to use language that's not quite refined sometimes, just to show I'm hard-boiled. . . . Yes, I suppose it does go deeper than mere words. I can't say I'm crazy to be considered ladylike, you know. When all's said and done, a woman does this sort of thing for what there is in it. It's a profession, and when you get in the way of it there are worse ways of earning a living. . . . What's that you say? See the world? I don't see much of it. I very often never set foot on a dock except at the end of the voyage on South Street. I can tell you I've never had any good reasons for sightseeing in foreign parts. . . .

"Yes, I know. You want me to tell you how I came to take up with ships. Well, if you'll leave me work round to it in my own way you'll find out. Seeing it's you, madam, I don't mind. We were talking about the queer folks we have on board. Queer things happen, too, as I could tell of, only the company naturally don't want them to get about. Don't expect me to talk scandal, please. What? Those girls last trip? That isn't scandal. The company don't want their custom, I can tell you. I mean unfortunate events. They jinx a ship in no time at all. We had a hophead who went in for somnambulism on the side one voyage. She scared me stiff. Fancy coming along the passage past all those

closed doors in the early morning, before daylight, with only the pilot lights showing up the shadows, and bumping into a big white-faced woman in a cerise-coloured peignoir, walking in her sleep! The deck steward, who had to look after her when she was sitting in her chair on the promenade, told us he was losing his mind. When she wasn't staring at the horizon she was trying to bribe him with a fifty-dollar bill to bring her a bottle of brandy and a tumbler. The nurse who was with her had warned him it was as good as murder to bring her alcohol, and Jimmy has a conscience, anyway. It was clever of us to get that woman ashore in Havana without the other passengers thinking she was more than just strange. Only one slip. The captain was standing at the gangway, as usual, shaking hands with them, and when she came by he offered to do the same by her. And she tried to push past him so sudden he nearly fell into the dock. But in the excitement only one or two of us noticed what was happening. Poor thing, she died down there. We brought the coffin up two voyages later. . . .

"No, I'm not dodging the question at all. I have to explain to you how life on a ship is a very different thing if you look at it from my end of the alleyway. It's like the chief says—with you it's the voyage. With us it's only one voyage out of fifty, the day's work. The chief told me once he met a man in a theatre lobby uptown. 'Don't you remember me?' this bird says. 'I was a passenger on your ship a couple of years ago. I remember you.' You see? The chief couldn't remember for the life of him. It's the same with other things. And besides, we have our own lives to live, ashore. . . . No, I'm not married yet. I live with my cousin and her three, in Newark, New Jersey. . . . Oh, well, maybe.

"Well, if extraordinary things are what you are anxious

to hear about, I can tell you of one case that was never cleared up. It was my first trip, too. A girl, about twenty, came on board past the assistant purser, bound for Cartagena in South America, and the baggage master had her one trunk put in her room, Number Seventeen, 'B' deck, without bath, according to the check from her ticket. She had a suitcase in her hand which she held on to, as far as anybody remembered. The bell-hop denied he had refused to carry it for her, and he told the truth for the only time in his life, I fancy. She walked through the entrance hall, down the stairs to 'B' deck, and she was never seen again. She simply vanished from human sight. . . . Yes, of course I know the story. I'm telling it.

"Of course, mind you, it takes time to locate a disappearance like that. She'd been ticked off at the purser's list, her trunk was in her room, and the second steward was writing her name on a pink ticket for Table 'C,' where he always put unaccompanied ladies. I don't know why, unless it's because there was a draft in that corner and he knew they wouldn't kick. Officially she was on the ship, and passengers are always anywhere but in their cabins during the first excitement of getting away. They go up on the boat deck and fall over the air blowers or try to reach the bridge unless the master at arms heads them off. They'd climb the funnel if they knew how to reach the little iron ladder to the whistle. Sometimes they want a bath at once, and you can't blame them if they've just arrived from Texas or Wisconsin on the Limited.

"Anyway, this girl wasn't missed for hours. She didn't come to dinner, but nobody was going to pester a girl to eat if she wanted to lie down. There were about three hundred passengers on board. The only person who could be expected to make an official report was the stewardess for 'B' deck. That was myself. And for reasons best known

to myself at the time I never said a word. I knew, you see, the girl's story. I had a very good chance to know it.

"Her name was Annie, and she was married when she was eighteen to a young chap named Pynzen. Not that it matters, because he had to change it when he ran away to South America. On the ship she was listed under that name. Mrs. Oscar Pynzen, housewife, of Rovereto, New Jersey. And it was a girl of that name who disappeared as completely as though she had climbed through the porthole and dived into the Atlantic Ocean.

"She was married about two years before this trip, and her husband worked in New York, commuting from the Jersey side. He was something in the clothing trade. As far as she could make out he was shipping clerk in a furrier's house on Twenty-third Street. The fact is, he was not communicative about what he did. They lived with his parents, and the old people were of the quietly bullying kind, if you know what I mean. Their son was their white-headed boy, and in their opinion might have married much better than this Annie. Annie, according to them, had no spirit and didn't know much. Annie's folks were from New England and had not been very successful in life. She and their Oscar had become suddenly infatuated. It was one of those affairs that flare up like a fire when you pour kerosene on it, and then go black out. And Annie had no clear notion what had happened to her. The old people made it their business to explain that Annie was not a loving wife. Annie was getting the meals, making the beds, and cleaning the house for the four of them for her board and lodging. Young Pynzen never had any money. He was a sport. Annie, when she got away from him, was able to see it wasn't his fault. He had been a spoiled only child and had been babied. He never would have amounted to much perhaps, but as it was, he was simply a useless encumbrance.

But how was she to know? He was the only man of her acquaintance.

"She didn't understand him. It was all very well for the old people to nag her for not being a loving wife, but she knew that was not the trouble. She didn't understand him. He had a streak of pirate blood in him, you might say. He ought to have lived in buccaneer days. He used to take Annie to Palisades Park and go on the switchback, and then, as the thing plunged down as though it was going smash into eternity, he'd grab Annie, who was simply rigid with fright, and kiss her so hard he'd make her mouth bleed. She couldn't respond to his moods, and he would get angry and dumb. There was something he wanted, but Annie didn't know what it was, let alone have it to give.

"Things went on like that for about eighteen months, and then Master Pynzen disappeared. His firm went to the police with a tale that he had assisted in a robbery of a hundred thousand dollars' worth of furs. He had consigned the goods, and they had been shipped and never seen again. Neither was he. After the noise died down and the men who actually stole the things were caught, the old people got a letter from Cartagena in South America, from Oscar. He was broke and begged them to send him a few hundred dollars to start in business. He had been let down by the people he had worked for in that fur deal.

"Respectable well-to-do people like you won't understand how the old Pynzen folks believed their boy and blamed Annie for not keeping him back from a life of disgrace. Yes, they blamed that girl! And when the letter came they sent him all they could get together, about a thousand dollars. And they decided that Annie ought to go to him and keep house for him in that foreign country where he was. They wrote that Annie was coming.

"Annie didn't know what to do at first. She had a strong

sense of duty, but she was certain sure as death that not only Oscar didn't want her but he couldn't support her down there. She didn't love him any more. Love can't stand the sort of life the Pynzens were in the habit of leading Annie. She seemed to herself to be stunned as far as her affections were concerned. She couldn't organize herself to make any resistance. She was carried along. The old people were strong characters. They acted according to their lights. In a way they were right in sending their son's wife to help him in such circumstances. But their son's wife didn't want to go. She knew he was only a broken reed. The idea of being cast away in that South American country, alone, not knowing the language, and perhaps no money, was like a nightmare to the girl. It paralyzed her faculties. She went towards it as if she was in a trance. And you've got to remember that if she didn't do as they said they could turn her into the street.

"Perhaps it was the excitement which brought on old Mr. Pynzen's illness. On the day of sailing he was laid up and his wife couldn't leave him. They were a truly devoted couple, I'll say that for them. Annie had to go by herself. She had a taxi all the way so she wouldn't get lost. And she arrived at the pier behind a string of other cabs with passengers for the same ship. It was as sure as anything can be in this world that Annie would go to Cartagena, wherever that might be. She wasn't good at geography, and the name meant nothing to her, you must remember.

"She was very frightened. The taxi moved up to the archway, and she had the notion it was the entrance to a prison. She could see policemen and men in strange uniforms standing about, and just beside her a flight of steps leading up into an office. She had the idea of jumping out and running into this office as a way of escaping from the terrors of going on a ship. She had never seen

one, you know, except in the Sunday illustrated sections of the newspapers. She was looking at that office and deciding the taximan would be sure to make after her, for his fare, when the door swung open and a girl about her own age came rushing out. She had a suitcase in one hand and a letter in the other, and the minute she saw every cab in New York coming into the dock and not one in sight wanting a fare she looked up and caught Annie's eyes on her. She smiled and, standing on the step, put her head inside. Annie saw she was in a state about something.

" 'Dearie,' this girl says to Annie, 'I gotta get a cab to take me home quick. Lemme get in with you till you've paid him off, will you, there's a dear.' And she opened the door and got in beside Annie.

" 'What's the matter?' asked Annie. She had no idea of what was in the girl's mind.

" 'I can't do it!' says the girl. 'I just had a wire, and my business won't wait. Mr. Spicer can think what he likes.'

" 'Who's he?' asks Annie. 'Have you been fired?'

" 'Fired? No!' says the girl. 'It's the other way round. Oh, I wish they'd get a move on! Dearie, give this letter to the chief steward and say yours truly's got a sick mother and he'll have to do the best he can. Will you?' And she gives Annie the letter.

" 'A sick mother?' says Annie, taking it.

" 'That's the tale,' says the girl, and then in a whisper: 'Dearie, it was my steady wired me. He's on his way home from Canada. We've had a row, and I took this job, you see. Now he's coming back. Mr. Spicer, the superintendent, he won't listen. But if I go away now it ud be the end of me. Now,' she says, 'you get out—here's the place—and I'll sit back till he's got your trunk. You can take this with you,' she says, giving Annie her suitcase, 'what's in it

belongs to the Company, anyhow. I don't want it any more.'

"Well, there they were. The taxi man was glad enough to get another fare like that all the way out to Jamaica somewhere, too, and Annie goes up the gangway with her own bag and a cheap little paper suitcase along with a crowd of other passengers all just arrived and passed by the customs. And she went down the curved staircase in the entrance hall of the ship and simply vanished.

"Now let me go on with the story. I know what you're going to say. Just wait, and I'll explain it. I was just into my uniform when there came a knock at the door, and there was the chief steward, a little shrimp of a man with his head on one side and looking worried enough.

" 'Oh, you've come,' he says, looking relieved for a second. 'Have you a letter from Mr. Spicer?' I gave him the letter and he tore it open and read it. 'That's all right,' he says. 'Get out into the entrance hall and take your orders from the second steward. One of the boys said he heard you wasn't coming. Miss Boothby's on the other side. Have you been long on these ships, Miss Cotter?' I said, 'No, not very long,' and that was a fact—about five minutes. 'Well,' he says, 'be as quick as you can,' and he goes out.

"The ship was in the river and sailing down towards the Narrows when I came out and took my place in the entrance hall. But there was plenty to do. All my rooms were full except that Number Seventeen, and you'd hardly believe how some of those women were lying down already and turning pale at the very thought of the sea, though it was as smooth as glass. You see they had nothing to do but think about it. If they'd been me, with work to do and a secret locked up in my breast, they'd have had no time to imagine themselves getting sick. You people see us stewardesses standing about, or sitting here the same as I'm doing now, doing a little mending and making the Palm

Court look homelike, as I was saying, and you have no idea of what work there is keeping a lot of women and children pleased and comfortable. . . . What's that you say? Well, I fancy we earn all we get, anyway.

"And then, late that evening, after dinner, the steward and the purser, they want to know if I've seen a Mrs. Pynzen, Number Seventeen B. I said I'd been to her cabin and seen her trunk but as far as I knew she hadn't been down off the deck. Then the hunt began. The assistant purser said he'd checked her off and he had her ticket to prove it. Then where was she? Of course he wanted to know if they thought he had her in his vest pocket. Sailing days are trying for assistant pursers as well as stewardesses. The ship was searched the same as for stowaways, but nothing was found, as you may imagine. The captain had the purser up in his room and tried to find out what Mrs. Pynzen looked like. A blonde, the purser thought. There was fifty blondes on the ship, all sizes. A hint like that didn't amount to much.

"And finally the captain decided that although Mrs. Pynzen had come on board according to the pursers, seeing they had her ticket, she must have run away again. The second steward was sure of it. He had been hurrying to the office just before sailing, and he saw a taxi drive out with a blonde girl in it. Didn't see her face, you understand—only her profile as the cab passed him. He remembered it because most cabs are empty going out. Friends of passengers generally wait to wave good-bye at the end of the pier. That settled it for the captain, and he sent a wireless to the office to tell them about it. And the voyage, my first voyage on the ocean, began. . . .

"You're quite right there. I certainly don't tell this story to everybody who asks. I thought you'd credit me with ordinary common sense. Bless you, I knew you were different.

Do you suppose I don't know all about you? A look at the list in the purser's office puts me wise to who's in my rooms. And there's a *Who's Who* in the library, even if I don't place people all at once. I've enjoyed your stories, madam, ever since I was in high school. I don't know your husband's so well, but I'm sure it's my loss. I made up my mind, if you were anyways human, to tell you the story of how I came to make it a profession. Not all famous people are as approachable as you, though. We had a writer last voyage, and he was all right, but his wife! She didn't want another deck chair within twenty feet of her. Old Southern family. She ought to have taken a couple of suites, one for herself and another for her social secretary. She gave me a dollar when they got off at Havana. I very nearly told her I'd been taught never to take money from strangers. But her husband knew all about it, and squared us like a gentleman.

"Where was I? Oh, yes. Well, it didn't look so simple when the ship got out to sea and the future was to be considered. Annie Pynzen had vanished into thin air, you might say, but I couldn't help being interested in what would happen to her, could I? Knowing her story, as you might say. And I had an idea, too, that perhaps she had misjudged her husband. She had been fond of saying she had never had a real chance in life, but neither had he. He wasn't fitted for commercial pursuits, really. He ought to have been sent into the navy when he was young and been hammered into shape. Discipline was what both of them needed, you see. It's what everybody needs to a certain extent. You realize that when you work on a ship. It's irksome at first, and then, when you're used to it, you understand it and can't get on without it. Well, those two poor souls needed it badly. All he'd had was liberty to make a fool of himself, and all she'd had was ballyragging and

hazing. And it had made them both desperate. Thinking it over, going South in fine weather, I could see that.

"We had a good many passengers leave at Havana, same as you will, and the work was easier. Besides, I was getting used to it. Miss Boothby, the other stewardess and my senior, was a decent sort, married but separated and using her maiden name, and she gave me many little hints. We took a walk ashore in Havana and, if you'll believe me, I liked the place. I had had an idea those Dago countries were impossible for white women. Shows how ignorant you can be, even in the United States. There's an atmosphere about them, if you get what I mean. The past is there in the present, you may say. Now in a place like Rovereto, New Jersey, there's scarcely any present, no past, and no future. Nothing to get *romantic* about, I mean. It's difficult to explain. Anyhow, I liked it. Miss Boothby didn't, so there you are. As for Cartagena, when I asked her about it, she says: 'Oh, don't you go on shore there, my dear. It's a terrible place.' But somehow I made up my mind, unless I was sick, I'd take a chance. I didn't know any more about it than about Havana, and I had my reasons. Two more days and we were there.

"And for the life of me I couldn't help thinking of that girl's husband and how he'd run away from Rovereto and Twenty-third Street to that fairy city sitting in the ocean and all shining with golden domes and Spanish castles. Oh, with your pen, madam, you could describe it, and I'm sorry you're not going so far. To me it was beautiful beyond words. Not that I wasn't frightened. There's a rule the Company have, as we can't go on shore with gentlemen friends unless we're married or at least engaged to them. Miss Boothby wouldn't hear of it. So there was nothing left for me to do but go alone. And although I started when the sun was only just setting and thinking to see

that wonderful place in the twilight—such was my ignorance, you see, never having been in the tropics—what was my surprise to have it get dark like some one had closed a door. Just as I was arriving in the city, the harbour being a long walk outside the walls. Such walls! Going through was like a tunnel. And as soon as it was dark it was moonlight, if you understand what I mean. Like liquid silver. I came into that place like a lost spirit from another world. I didn't know where to turn or what to do. There were palm trees—real ones, not made of cloth like we have here—and a place that looked like a convent along one side, and there was a fountain in the middle of a square. So beautiful, to my way of thinking! But it was a wonder I noticed anything at all, I was so scared. I couldn't be sure I'd get back to the ship. I saw a store where I thought I could get information, at the end of a long arcade, and I started across in the moonlight to reach it. And then a carriage drove up and the driver stopped to let me get in. I was so surprised I did just that. He says, 'Hotel?' and thinks I, there'll be somebody there to put me wise to what I want to know, and I says, 'Yes, go on.' And he drives up the dark street past the store, which was a liquor saloon with several tough-looking parties drinking, so I was thankful I hadn't gone in. I know better now, of course. It was just my ignorance.

"Well, there wasn't but one hotel in the place as far as I could make out, and in a minute we were there. Very strange, if you ask me, and I made matters worse by poking my head into the bar. A tall young man in the sort of costume you see in the movies, big hat and riding breeches, gets up and comes out to me. 'What would you be wanting, miss?' he asks, and I felt he was safe enough. 'I'm the stewardess off the ship,' I says, 'and a friend of mine in New Jersey is married to a gentleman down here, a Mr. Oscar

Hempsley!' That was the name Annie's husband took when he came down, you see. 'I suppose,' I says, 'you couldn't tell me where he lives.'

"He stares at me seriously for a minute and scratches his ear. 'You say he's married up in New Jersey?' he asks. 'Well, that's too bad.' He stares harder at me than ever. 'I can tell you where he lives,' he says, 'since I suppose you got a message for him from his wife, but I dunno as it will do him much good.'

" 'Why, he isn't in jail, is he?' I asks, trembling. 'No, he ain't in jail, far as I know, miss. But I was wonderin' if I'd told the truth when I said I could tell you where he lives. He may not be living anywhere now. He's been at death's door for over a week now.'

" 'Oh, please take me to him,' I says. 'It may be too late. And I really do have a message from his wife. She's a friend, a particular friend of mine.'

" 'That's all very well, but you'll not be wanting to go to the sort of place he is in, I'm thinkin',' he says. 'You see, miss, he hasn't been actin' down here as if he was married. It might be unpleasant for you, meetin' the señorita. Not that she isn't lookin' after him a sight better'n many a nurse would. She won't have him moved, and the doctor he says it wouldn't do him any good. He's a dyin' man.'

" 'What's the matter with him?' I says, and he tells me how Oscar Hempsley, as he called him, had gone into business with a half-breed and bought a small ship with a gasoline engine. And one trip, coming round from a place called Rio Hacha, they'd shipped some big seas, and the exhaust pipe broke, and the poor half-breed was being choked to death in the little engine room. Oscar, he dropped down in there and got him out after a struggle. But he couldn't get out himself. He managed to stop the engine before he crumpled up on the floor alongside of it. And he never

got the gas out of his lungs. He'd been expected to die for over a week.

"'This girl has kept the breath in his body,' says my friend, 'but it won't be for long. I'm sorry, miss.' And he stood waiting, his cigarette behind his back, for me to say what I was going to do.

"'I must go to see him,' I says. 'It's no time to stand on ceremony, is it?' 'No,' he says, 'if you've a message from his lawful wife, it isn't.' And then he asked me how Oscar came to leave his home. 'He had money when he came here, but he was soon gypped out of most of it,' he says.

"'That's his own business, I guess,' I told him. 'Take me there, will you?'

"He said he would, and we took the carriage, as had been waiting, and drove back to the square again. I couldn't tell you what they call it. I never went ashore there again. He went under the arcade and up a flight of stone steps to the floor above. There was a long passage with a lantern burning at the far end and doors on each side, like an alleyway in a ship. And halfway down there was a door open and the light of an oil lamp streaming across. Some one was talking. We went along, and my friend touches me on the shoulder and nods as if to say, 'This is it.'

"But I held on to him and made him come as far as the door. I was scared. The voice! *His* voice; but so changed. It was hoarse and weak, and it ran on and on in the same key. He was talking to somebody he called Chiquita. Over and over again it was Chiquita, Chiquita. I looked in at the door, but there was a screen, so I couldn't see the bed. Beyond was a curtain drawn back, and there was a little balcony, and the moonlight streaming over the old Spanish walls and towers outside. Chiquita, Chiquita! I shall never forget that word as he repeated it over and over. It was,

in its way, the key. It was romance. It was all he'd starved for up there in Twenty-third Street. And in his babble you could have detected how he was not really unhappy. Why, it was the talk of a happy child—just a boy. And do you know she didn't understand a word of what he said except her name—Chiquita? Think of them there, talking by signs! And yet I dare say she understood him better than his wife did. We stood in the shadow listening to his voice, and even then it was plain the sound of it was failing. Suddenly he began to laugh. 'Ah, Chiquita, if she was to come, eh? What would she say to this rigout, eh? My old woman says she's coming—coming! Oh, Lord!' he says, and then, 'Go away, Chiquita, *vamos!* Ah, but you wouldn't now. She'll only find a dead man. Don't you go, Chiquita.' Oh, but it went to my heart! I wanted to tell him that it was all right, that he needn't worry about Annie ever coming down. And then the girl, she hears us and comes out suddenly into the light.

"Well, you couldn't blame him. She was one of those dark voluptuous creatures you always think of with a red flower in their hair. Not a big girl, you understand, but one of the attractive sort. When she saw us she screamed and ran out to the balcony. My friend, he spoke to her in Spanish, and she came back to us. They talked. She looked at me. I couldn't say a word. My friend says: 'She says he is dying. Do you want to see him?' I said, 'No, I couldn't. Tell her to tell him his wife sends her love.' He repeated this to the girl, and she nodded and went in behind the screen. My friend said, 'He don't know any Spanish and she can't speak English—I'll tell him,' and he went in too and left me out in the passage.

"I heard them talking in a low tone for a minute and then Oscar called out, 'My God! Then she's come! Ah!' and then there was silence. The girl Chiquita began to speak very

fast in Spanish. The screen suddenly tumbled down as my friend stepped away from her, and I saw Oscar fallen back on the bed. I guess he was gone—then. Mr. Stokes, the gentleman as brought me there, he said they must get the doctor quick, and he hurried away. The girl looks at the man on the bed and then, after a long while, at me. And I guess she knew.

"But there was nothing the doctor could do for him. Mr. Stokes, who was in the oil game down there, escorted me back to the ship, and I told him how Oscar's wife had disappeared and how the old people would appreciate it if his body could be sent up to them. He said he'd fix it. He was a real friend. He comes on board whenever we get to Cartagena and he happens to be there. He often goes up into the interior. There's a chance of him coming up with us this trip, on leave. Not that that has anything to do with this story I'm telling. Well, I don't know. Of course he was interested. He says he's determined to find out all he can about me, and make sure what I say is true. I don't see why people want to worry so much about the truth, do you? You'd think they'd rest when they're happy. . . . What's that you say? Do I like him? Oh, I like him. I like the way he talks about widows. Says if he ever marries it'll be an attractive widow with no nonsense about her. No, he's just a boy, as I see it. I humour him. Oh, nothing serious. With Annie's experience so close to me, you can understand I'll be careful in my own case. Still, you can't tell *what* you'll do in the future. Yes, madam, three bells is half-past five; and I must be going down now, if you'll excuse me."

THE SWORD OF DOCTOR DAMOCLES

I

DOCTOR PAUL DAMOCLES belonged to the Islands. He was a Cretan himself, with an ancestry running back to Periclean days like a miraculously fine gold thread through a tapestry of sombre butcheries and inextricable minglings of bloods and races. But he lived on another island, a mere hummock in the Ægean Sea, until the wars called him up and afforded him a series of surprising readjustments, mental, physical, and emotional. About the time of our Armistice he was back again on his island of Teriphos, somewhat the worse for wear, and there he encountered Nora Grannard, who was a series of wars in herself, if the truth were known.

He was the only doctor on Teriphos, which was inhabited by a few hundred miners, who dug emery out of the bowels of the mountain, a few fishermen and farmers, and great cohorts of goats who walked like flies on the sides of apparently vertical precipices, and butted each other with unflagging valour. The island had been one of the chief sources of abrasive powder until some scientific person devised a way of making it as an electrical byproduct, thus bestowing vast benefit upon the world and impoverishing Teriphos. The place was a mining community, of course, but only in a very literal sense. It was much more like a detached portion of heaven which had accidentally dropped into the Ægean Sea. Out of centuries of storm and strife had emerged once more an age of innocence. There were no roads in Teriphos, no hotels, no wharves, and almost no money. Most things were paid for in kind. Simple

folk, entirely uncontaminated by the wicked world. Evil comes from within, in the clash of lust and law. There is a stage in which worldly things evoke no more than a child-like curiosity. When the good folk of Megalopolis, the tiny blue-and-white town perched on a limestone peak over-looking the tiny harbour, went into their equally tiny movie house to see the battered old films that came by the monthly interisland steamer, they laughed with glee at the comics and the dramas. Most of it was unintelligible to them. Their laughter was aroused by the rich Kiriose or gentleman losing his wife to the visiting patrician with the fine automobile. To be struck in the face with a custard pie was not funny to them. It was a tragedy and a crime to waste delicious food. Different people have different conceptions of humour. The people of Teriphos imagined Nora Grannard to be a sort of goddess, while the women who knew her and had suffered from her depredations called her other things, like the Pirate Craft, the Home Wrecker, the Porch Climber, the Cradle-Robber, and the Man Eater. These phrases meant no more than that Nora was rich, modern, attractive, and very much alive. They were flung, behind her back, at Nora out of spite. They corresponded to the huge boulders which the citizens of Megalopolis used to set rolling down the declivity to the port in the old days when the Turkish pirate vessels disembarked their crews of bloodthirsty robbers on the beach.

Doctor Damocles came of a wealthy noble family in Crete, where his father, a magnificent old patriarch, resided on an immense estate and winked at the peasants who were surreptitiously making hashish. Paul had received a good medical training in the German hospital at Athens, and his experiences in Macedonia had provided him with unusual facilities for investigating wounds, typhus, dysentery, and the action of fire upon live human beings when shut

up in a burning building. All these impressions had scorched and hardened the surface of a charming and innocent character. He had obtained an honourable discharge and was about to return to his island. It seemed to his war-weary eyes like a monastery where he could heal his soul and recapture some of the gaiety and peace of earlier days.

But he was on his way back to Teriphos when his father wrote him from Akrotivi, which is in Crete, that the army was landing in Anatolia, and he had private advices from Athens that His Majesty in person would lead his victorious troops upon Byzantium to restore the glory of the ancient Eastern Empire. The Hellenic Power would run from the Golden Horn to the Adriatic, from Janina to the Cretan shores. Paul was implored, for the honour of his family, who had been satraps of the old emperors, who had fought the Venetian soldiers foot by foot in the mediæval wars, to proceed to Smyrna and accept a new commission which his father's friend, Colonel Paleokori, had secured for him.

And Paul left his little island again and went to join the army of Anatolia. This was not a period of which he spoke, even to his friend Mr. Sarpedon the tribune. As a lieutenant and later captain in the Expeditionary Army Paul had performed feats of extraordinary heroism. The Damocles family were unfamiliar with fear. What they were also unfamiliar with was the almost incredible character of the modern political gamblers who controlled the destinies of the eastern Mediterranean. An army which had been in the field almost continuously for nearly ten years was left in midair without ammunition or supplies, without supports. Generals destroyed themselves in their tents. One fell on his sword like the conquered tyrants of old. Turkish cavalry found him impaled and gave him a grim but hon-

ourable burial. Captain Damocles, with his battalion, fought a rear-guard action for days. They made sorties and defended villages whose inhabitants fired from vineyards and tobacco sheds into their backs, and cut off the ears and hands of the wounded. He entered Smyrna at the height of the panic, half a day ahead of the victorious Osmanli. He put his men in a boat until it was almost sinking with the load, and he and his brother officers swam off to the waiting transports, their swords and papers in their teeth. And eventually they reached Athens and reported for duty.

What followed had clouded the mind of Paul Damocles. He did not understand it. He found that in some mysterious fashion His Majesty was no longer the head of the state. He had abdicated, and a swarm of officers in bright new uniforms, men who had been in Athens during all that terrible time in Anatolia, had the power to put himself in prison. He saw Colonel Paleokori, in company with a score of others who had achieved miracles of heroism, marched up against a wall, their epaulettes cut from their tunics, and then shot down like vermin. His own uniform was stripped from him, and his sword, the sword which he had thrust through the neck of a formidable bull-headed maniac who had killed six men before he could be stopped, broken across the knee of a person who looked as though he knew more about shining shoes than commanding men. A vile *lustros!* And, then Dismissed the Service for cowardice in the face of the enemy! Paul discovered that his pay was forfeited and he was to find his own way home. Which he did. In his baggage, one old-fashioned carpet bag such as you see the peasants bringing to town on market days, he placed the broken sword. It was all he had.

And after a while he went back to Teriphos. He was more in need of a monastery than ever now. His was a strange

destiny, because his mind knew nothing of modern Europe. His heart, beneath the scorched blackness of despair, was simple and primitive. It seemed to him that he had been down into hell and by some marvellous good fortune escaped back to earth. He had always been shy with women, and the island girls were nearly as wild as their goats. He regarded them with a blend of professional unconcern and aristocratic contempt. He was content to play baccarat and billiards with his friend Sarpedon and live forever on his magic isle of Teriphos, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot." And then Nora Grannard's yacht dropped anchor in Megalopolis Bay.

Mr. Sarpedon was not intellectual. He was fond of fishing and conversation. He had no acquaintance with languages save modern Greek, which he spoke with the breath and vigour of the islanders. So when the yacht *Western Maid*, chartered in Marseilles by cable from Chicago, made her entirely unexpected appearance before his eyes, and the captain came up to say that his passengers wished to visit the antiquities of Teriphos, Mr. Sarpedon rode over on his mule to Doctor Paul Damocles' house and begged him to explain to those incomprehensible Franks that the island contained nothing whatever of interest.

Nora Grannard did not agree with him. She thought Doctor Damocles extremely good-looking. Nora did not want to see antiquities. She made a hobby of men. Men were extraordinary creatures, according to Nora. It must be admitted that she was one of those girls hated by every other woman on sight. They said the difference between her and the Western highwaymen was that while those gentlemen always got their men Nora was always getting some other woman's man. This was true, it must be confessed. Nora was one of those girls.

She was a phenomenon of modern post-war Europe and America. It is a singular result of our civilization that Nora Grannard, brimming with vitality, with a figure like a goddess and, as she herself naïvely put it, "enough looks to get by," had nothing in the world to do save spend the interest on large massive blocks of valuable mining, oil, traction, and public utility stocks all over the United States. Her invalid parents had died in Europe some years before. She had not even a home town. At seventeen, with one vigorous jump she had escaped from the sisters in an Oregon convent and proceeded to enjoy herself. She was tremendously curious about the world, because while she was a child and her parents were very poor she had had sundry peculiar glimpses of it, before the sisters had caught her and informed her, much to her astonishment, that there was another world, for which they would prepare her.

It was, however, the World of Men in which Nora was interested. They were extraordinary beings. They abandoned the most beautiful women and crowded about Nora, who was sane enough to know that she herself was not beautiful. All over Europe, in London, Deauville, Paris, Homburg, Berlin, Vienna, and points east, there were men who had temporarily abandoned their wives, their fiancées, their work, and their hopes of heaven in order to worship at the shrine when Nora Grannard, with her yachts, her motor cars, her seventeen wardrobe trunks of marvellous clothes, her eighty-nine hats, her ineffable self-effacing uncle and aunt, her superb figure and her cheeky, piquant, eternally alluring and wistful little face came into their lives. She came and went, leaving them possibly none the worse for wear, but changed. They had their day and ceased to be. When they love again they will have a new and exacting standard of comparison. They will meet many women more beautiful than Nora, many women more witty

and intellectual, but never will they meet anything in the world more intoxicatingly desirable than she seemed to them, she who was the very incarnation of joyous and irresponsible affection. These men contemplate their emotions in consternation, a mingling of relief and remorse, with a faint nostalgia of incompleteness. It had been glorious but a little too much for them. They have been tested and found inadequate for the rôle of Nora's Flaming Knight Errant, to rescue her from her fate. They wonder grimly how Desmond Kahler, her fiancé, stands it. Some are intelligent enough to wonder how he will stand her after he is married to her. Only one of them has ever heard of Doctor Paul Damocles. Phil Langhorne happened to be the last but one in the long list of men, and it was Nora's custom to have her affairs overlap a little. It seemed to make for security, to give her a sort of pull over the new candidate. She had a genius for self-deception. It gave her a perfectly genuine thrill to have men reproach her for sacrificing herself on the altar of a lofty and idealistic honour. She was always perfectly frank about her engagement, be it said, to Desmond Kahler, one of the wealthiest of the younger diamond merchants of the Middle West. It loomed in the recesses of her shrewd and practical little mind, which worked while her maidenly heart sought the matchless man of her dreams, as a beacon showing her the way back to her harbour of refuge. It was like a huge auriferous crag athwart whose dark solidity the opalescent mists of her transitory loves were forever drifting.

The affair with Phil Langhorne, who was a clever and rising editor of a London weekly, had been abruptly ended by a cable from Desmond, who had suggested to Mr. and Mrs. Hopkinson, Nora's uncle and aunt, that a cruise in classical waters before they returned to America would be

a suitable finishing of their European tour. Perhaps Nora had been in London long enough.

They agreed. The Hopkinsons always agreed with Desmond Kahler. They were in very moderate circumstances themselves, and it was at Desmond's request that they acted as chaperons to the orphan girl. The European trip, now lasting well over a year, had been Desmond's idea. The Hopkinsons knew that Desmond was the only person in the world besides themselves who understood Nora's ardent and complex character. They knew he loved her with an indestructible patience, fidelity, and tact. They effaced themselves whenever it became incumbent upon them to do so, and Nora raced through her passionate affairs with various extraordinary men. Nora was fond of saying she preferred men who did things. Mrs. Hopkinson once remarked that the men Nora fancied seemed capable of doing anything and anybody. On the other hand, some, like Phil Langhorne, for example, were gentlemen. But all of them had been aware, behind their infatuation, of the rules of the game. They were all aware of Desmond as an indestructible fact when they clasped Nora's ravishing form in their arms and muttered fiercely:

"Why must you do it, darling? What right has he to hold you to a promise made when you were a child?"

She would tell them, lying perfectly quiescent:

"Ah, but I owe everything to him. My mother, you know, left me in his care. She died in his arms. He is our oldest friend. How could I? It is my duty. Don't spoil what little happiness I can get out of life, dearest, with such thoughts. Let us just live for to-day!"

And it was astonishing how inevitable these men, clever, shrewd, successful in their various professions, often faithful in a general way, would play up to Nora's belief in her own sincerity. She had a curiously double nature. She

never concealed the valuable engagement ring Desmond had placed on her capable sun-browned hand. That three-carat stone, embedded in sapphire dust, could have told a remarkable tale had it become suddenly endowed with speech. The secret, of course, lay in the fact that everybody knew the rules of the game. But Doctor Paul Damocles, with his flawless lineage, his physical beauty, and his curious inexperience of Western ways, did not even know it was a game.

When the London affair was brought to an end by that cable from Desmond, Phil Langhorne was left so suddenly that he seemed stunned.

"Dearest," Nora told him in the front room of her sweet little flat in Queen Anne's Gate, all stripped of the charming bric-à-brac she carried with her, "dearest, it is all for the best. Let us have one more night on the river to remember all our lives. It's got to be."

"I can't let you go, darling!" he groaned, holding her to him.

They had dinner that evening at Richmond, and there was a moon.

"How lovely!" she crooned. "I'll never forget this," and she pointed to the silver stream below them. "And you!" And Phil, who had married a well-meaning but no-account girl while he was at Oxford and had been trying hard to buy her off ever since, took Nora once more in his arms and swore he would never give her up.

The next morning the Hopkinsons and Nora, seen off by a subdued Phil, set out across the Channel and France to join the yacht *Western Maid* at Marseilles.

"I live only for your letters now, darling," he murmured. Nora's eyes were wet with tears as she put her face up for a last kiss.

And it was characteristic of Nora Grannard that Phil

was not disappointed. The letters came along every day except Sunday. There is no delivery in London on Sunday. She covered pages with a swift-running script telling him of her journey, of how she wished he was with them, of the men she met. Nora had a marvellous faculty for meeting men. And what beasts they were, except her darlingest Phil! A man, rather nice-looking too, on the P. L. M. train, had tried to get fresh! And the brute was married! It shows what love will do to perfectly good men, for Phil read of this miscreant with indignation. He did not know that the villain, the rotter, the cad, enjoyed himself very much indeed with *la belle Américaine*. What a figure, *hein!* He even went with her to the telegraph office, while the Hopkinsons were looking after the baggage, where Nora wrote Phil a cable covering several sheets. When she was told it would cost four hundred and eighteen francs she tore it up and condensed the message to half a dozen lines. Phil spent two pounds ten shillings on his reply, which reached Marseilles after the *Western Maid* had sailed for Naples.

At sea Nora found an unexpected difficulty in communicating with Phil. The wireless operator who, to use her own words, was rather good-looking, was at once in the toils. He was intoxicated with the Mediterranean nights and Nora's ravishing way of coming in to see how the radio worked. She sent a message of dutiful affection to Dearest Desmond, and the operator moodily weighed his chances of being found out and fired if he killed it. The captain had to speak to him several times about hanging round the passengers' quarters at night.

But when they reached Teriphos, where the yacht captain said there were very interesting ruins and where he himself intended to get some hashish to sell privately in Port Said or Constantinople, Phil be-

gan to revive in London. Letters came in batches. Phil was not particularly interested in Greek doctors, especially rather good-looking ones, but it gave Nora a chance to tell him how dreadfully she was bored by all other men except her own darlingest Phil. She described the trips they made on the loveliest little island in the word.

"*How I wish you were here, dearest, to share it all with your own Nora! The young doctor is the interpreter, and is rather good-looking in a way, but it is an awful bore to have to keep men in their place. I really believe he imagines he is in love with me. I do try so hard to be fair, but it is no use. I sometimes feel I loathe men.*"

This was not an accurate description of what was going on. Mr. and Mrs. Hopkinson sometimes looked furtively at each other in the privacy of their cabin and hoped no interfering fool on board would give Desmond any details. Captain Graeme, however, was the only man who knew that Desmond had chartered the *Western Maid*. The Hopkinsons need have had no fear. Men who rise to be commanders of private yachts have to qualify in more than navigation and seamanship. They are supreme examples of intelligent discretion. Apart from this, although there was nothing effeminate about Desmond, he being an extremely astute business man, there was an almost maternal insight and sagacity in the way he gave Nora her head while she found herself. Nora told him—something—about the men she met—just very good friends, you know, dear—and he made no comment save to urge her to cultivate real men and not the worthless lounge lizards who infest the girl traveller's path in Europe, waiting for their prey.

But the Hopkinsons wondered what in the world Desmond would think of Doctor Damocles. Nora seemed to have gone out of her mind about him. The wireless operator, who had meditated upon a scheme for luring the

doctor up to the Cyclopean Ruins which crowned the cliff, and pushing him over, received a shock one evening. He had taken a message from London via Patras which made him blink, but he thought it worth while delivering at once. Nora and Paul Damocles were looking at the moon from under the awning aft. The young man came up and handed the envelope to Nora.

"Don't move, dear," she murmured to Paul. "I must get a light to read this."

She followed the operator forward to his office and, calmly breaking the seal, read what Phil had just sent, at rather considerable expense, through the air.

Nora Grannard. S. Y. Western Maid. Your sweet letter this morning made new man of me thousand kisses dreaming of day you reach London again confident all will be well darling. Your own Phil.

She raised her eyes to the young man watching her.

"Any answer, Miss Grannard?" he asked politely.

She shook her head slowly.

"No, a letter will do," she said smiling and went out. He saw her deliberately tearing the message into small pieces and dropping them over the side as she returned to Doctor Damocles under the awning.

"Gosh, she's a cough drop!" he muttered darkly, and treated himself to a grimace and a laugh. He could not help admiring the way she played the game. He looked at his own copy of Phil's message. "Poor blighter," he added in a very honest burst of pity.

But Doctor Paul Damocles was unaware that it was a game. He had been educated, it is true, but he was unfamiliar with the conditions and ethics of which girls like Nora Grannard, girls of intoxicating sex appeal and win-

some attractiveness, are the outward and visible sign. He came of a people who are a mystery to our Western minds. We cannot make head or tail of their vendettas and feuds. They are a quick, mercurial, emotional people, those levantine folk. They are aware of rumours that flash across seas and mountains and plains beyond the speed of radio. It is the speed of light. They are romantic fatalists. Most of them, when they go to war, go on their own account. The slightest omen—a dead bird in the gutter, a cloud the shape of a cross in the sky, a lunatic girl running screaming down the village street—will start them off and they will go through regular troops like a lance through brown paper. And then, when you least expect it, their ranks will soften and melt like wax. They have seen an omen, and they will all run away. Nobody knows why. To them the air is full of voices. The ravines are crowded with ghosts. The cities you see are only the top layers of middens going right back to the camps of Central Asiastic nomads. They go down into the earth so deep that these people are always digging their own graves in the very dust of their ancestral slaves and kings. Old lands, old terrors, old conceptions of fidelity and justice. And Doctor Paul Damocles, who had lived among these people all his life and shared some of their illusions, fell in love with Nora Grannard when she suddenly appeared like a goddess on his shining purple island in the Ægean Sea. Always supposing that the phrase "falling in love" is adequate. It was scarcely an accurate description of what happened to him. He seemed to draw back at first. He was cold and silent. Her frank American way of taking his arm and looking straight in his eyes, as though she had known him all her life, appalled him. He drew back, as a man draws back to make a leap over a precipice. And Doctor Paul leapt.

II

The *Western Maid*, four hundred tons, lay in Megalopolis Bay, made fast by many ropes, and with her two anchors splayed wide ahead of her. This was the pilot's doing. The pilot was a brother-in-law of Mr. Sarpedon, the tribune. Most of his work was berthing the little French steamers chartered by the Société Anonyme, which held the emery concession. They came once a fortnight. Mr. Soranza, a tall man of Venetian origin and saturnine countenance, was thoroughly acquainted with the peculiar weather to be found around Teriphos. He communicated his views to Captain Graeme of the *Western Maid*.

"As far as I understand him," the captain told Mr. Hopkinson, "if it comes on to blow we shall have to slip the anchors and hawsers and go right out. And stay out till it's over. If you don't mind my saying so, sir, we'd be far better at anchor off Scutari than here. How long do you fancy we'll be staying?"

"Well, not very long, not very long," replied old Mr. Hopkinson, who wished he knew himself. They had been there a week instead of the forty-eight hours originally suggested. He walked aft to where his wife sat with her crochet and sat down heavily. Nora was on a trip along the high headlands to the westward, with Doctor Damocles. Of course one of them ought to have been along; but riding on a mule up and down precipitous tracks did not appeal to the Hopkinsons. It was much pleasanter to stay on the yacht. And Nora had made it ominously plain that she desired no company. She was one of those girls.

"Well," said the lady without looking up, "if you think it will make any difference you can tell Nora, and see what she says. *I* have no control over her."

"You talk as though *I* had," retorted her husband gently.

"If we have to go out she will be safe enough until we get back, I suppose."

He sat there gazing at the enormous walls of the cove where they were made fast. Even Mr. Hopkinson, who knew nothing about the sea, could grasp the nature of the peril to which the *Western Maid* was exposed in case of a storm. He had been impressed by Mr. Soranza remaining on board almost continuously, filling the whole vessel with a distinct flavour of garlic and staring closely at the barometer with a scowl. The glass had been high for a week. According to Mr. Soranza this was unusual. And the concession ship was due. He himself, now that he had transacted a little business in hashish with Captain Graeme, was anxious to see the *Western Maid* on her way.

So was Mr. Sarpedon. He was a lonely man these days. The gentle sadness of Paul Damocles had given way to a nervous energy and sudden bursts of inarticulate profanity and pride. He was apparently being driven mad by love. Mr. Sarpedon was unable to enter fully into his friend's anguish. Love had done its worst upon Mr. Sarpedon years ago. He was a very much married man. His house appeared to be full of children, but this was an illusion due to their being all about the same size and very restless. Four took on the semblance of fourteen. He liked children. He would have relished it immensely had Doctor Damocles become mooney about one of the pilot's daughters and set up for himself in the married way. Marya Soranzo was like a ripe plum ready to fall into the doctor's hands. Anybody could see that, except Doctor Damocles himself. Marya was a good girl, Mr. Sarpedon thought to himself. But that Frankish girl, humph! Mr. Sarpedon had been to Saloniki once and to Constantinople once, and the sight of Nora Grannard's brightly rouged lips, her short bobbed hair, and mascaraed lashes evoked in Mr. Sarpe-

don's mind the most outrageous recollections. To him she was to be explained in only one way, and he would stare at his friend Doctor Damocles at times with profound perplexity.

"Marry!" he would mutter, in reply to the other's incredible declaration. "Marry a woman painted up like those harpies in the White Tower Gardens at Saloniki! She has cast a spell over your mind, Paul."

He would watch them start off on one of their journeys to the coves and ravines of the island with a dubious scowl on his round face. Nora, sitting on the broad platform of a mule saddle, a cigarette in her fingers, her legs, in their soft leather breeches and polished English riding boots, jauntily crossed, would wave to Mr. Sarpedon, and he would look grave. He had an idea she knew how he felt. He had an idea that Nora only wanted things because others wanted them or had them. When Paul confided to him the information that the Frankish girl was affianced to a man of vast wealth older than herself, a dealer in precious stones, he muttered in a rumbling way:

"He should make himself a gold-handled riding whip, with diamonds to give it a good grip, and use it. She will need it, that girl."

And Paul would rave like a depressed lunatic. Paul was in a bad way all the week the *Western Maid* was in Teriphos. He did not know how to proceed. Nora, who was in love with him in her own way, never allowed herself to be carried out of that way. Love to Nora was a species of hypnotism which made her entrancingly sweet when alone with some particular man and extremely impossible to live with when away from him. Nobody knew, save Mr. and Mrs. Hopkinson themselves, what they went through during Nora's infatuations. They suffered also from a secret amazement. Mr. Hopkinson had once remarked to his wife

that love seemed not only blind but chuckleheaded as well.

"And rude," added Mrs. Hopkinson placidly. "They treat us like furniture. Only Desmond is so different. Just think. He cabled simply to make sure I had been to that specialist."

"He understands," agreed Mr. Hopkinson. "And he is the only one who can manage her."

The Hopkinsons of course would have survived if Paul had carried out his threat to Mr. Sarpedon—to kill himself.

"But why?" demanded the astounded tribune. "Wed the girl if you cannot recover your mind any other way. But kill yourself! You, an officer of the army!"

"You forget," replied Doctor Damocles in a hollow voice. "I have had my epaulettes cut from my uniform and my sword broken across the knee of a renegade scullion. What have I to live for?"

"Wed the girl," insisted Mr. Sarpedon earnestly, holding the amber stem of his water pipe so that it pointed at Doctor Paul. "Go to her country and live on her estates. If that rich merchant seeks to have his revenge, kill him. See how they shoot in America! Last night, at the Kinema, six men were killed in one small village by a woman, just because they were Comitadji who were hired by the rich merchant to bring her to his house. Holy saints! I would like to see that country of America myself! I laughed till I was sick when the steam train hit the motor car. G-r-r! It was like a walnut when you have set your foot on it, that motor car. The drivers of trains must be men of importance in that country."

"You do not understand her," shouted Paul, his hands above his head.

"That is the truth," agreed Mr. Sarpedon. "You say she is a rich madama, and she reminds me of the Koritzai

at the White Tower. She is scented, and her eyes are the eyes of a woman with knowledge of men."

"Again I say you do not understand. You think Teriphos and Saloniki the whole world," retorted Doctor Paul. He thumped his friend Sarpedon on his broad back.

"Teriphos is a good place," that gentleman remarked gruffly. "Why do you fish no more? You thought Teriphos well enough until this last week. Holy Saint Michael! She comes!"

This was true. Nora was coming. She was dressed in a way to disturb and alarm Mr. Sarpedon. Her cream-coloured sports dress came barely to her knees. On her revealed and swelling bosom lay a necklace of seed pearls, and her dark bobbed head was covered by a turban of white satin set off with a large brooch of brilliants. She came up the steep street of the little town perched on the hill above the blue Ægean Sea like some strange beautiful visitant from another world. Mr. Sarpedon stared at her from beneath his heavy black brows as he sat by his door, an expression of bewildered shyness on his broad features. She was so sure of herself! But what mad streak in her brain made her paint her fresh young mouth and blacken her long silky lashes? She inspired in his untravelled heart a feeling of intolerable shame when she drew out a little golden casket with a mirror in its lid and began to renew the paint on her lips, so that they were like two scarlet sins. The girls working in the houses and carrying baskets of fruit on their heads turned to see the young madama who was in love with their young doctor. They stared, those short, broad-beamed, flat-footed wenches, their large black eyes absorbed in the contemplation of something beyond their intelligence. They watched Nora ascend the hill with Doctor Damocles, to where the mules waited, with the stolid

attentiveness of cattle disturbed by an alien intruder. Marya Soranza, the pilot's daughter, whose mother was a Greek woman of Melos, the island that lay like a cloud of jewelled mauve and azure on the southern horizon, came to the door as Nora passed, and watched her with sharp resentment. Marya was seventeen. She was a tall thing among those dumpy flat-footed creatures, and shapely. If her face had been washed she would have been pretty. Marya suspected that the desolate sensation in her bosom was due to Nora, and her face took on an expression of stubborn meditation. They came back after sunset, those two. Marya had often crouched by the church door and seen them go down the street. He had his arm around Nora sometimes, and sometimes she would have her arm round his neck. Marya watched. This time she went back into the house full of an obscure yet sinister resolution. Doctor Damocles and the Frankish madama vanished over the hill. Marya's mother stood at the door looking down the immense slope of the mountain side into the harbour. They could see the yacht like a white sliver between the mighty walls of the cove, and beyond Melos a bank of blue-black cloud in which the Greek woman's keen and experienced eye detected a flicker of lightning.

"He will go out," she muttered to her daughter. "The squall will be up in an hour. Go and run up the signal."

There was a short staff on the pilot's roof from which his wife was accustomed to keep him informed concerning the horizon beyond the headlands and the feel of the wind across the island.

As Marya bent the ragged blue-and-white pennant to the halyard and pulled it to the top of the staff her mind was preoccupied with Doctor Paul Damocles. Marya had never been anywhere except to Melos in the interisland steamer, and her sense of the proprieties was elementary.

To her it seemed that if the yacht bore away from Teriphos and left that Frankish girl on the island she herself might as well die. There was, however, an alternative. Marya pondered it. She was strong. She could go up the stony hillsides like a mountain goat. That Frankish girl was big but not strong. By and by, when she was older she would be like a fat white slug. Marya's sinewy fingers worked unconsciously upon a soft white throat. She knew nothing of the great game Nora had been playing for so long, only that in her own heart was a feeling of desolation. Even if Doctor Paul killed her afterwards, it would be better than to let that Frankish girl have him. As she worked in the little house, cooking the dinner, she watched the storm racing over the Ægean. She saw steam puffing from the bows of the *Western Maid*—they were heaving short on the anchors, getting ready to go out. Her father was down there, directing them. She frowned. The storm would catch those two on the Hill of the Cyclops. They were going up there. Marya, in her simple fashion, had had fleeting dreams of a lover like Paul holding her in his arms beneath the huge masses of masonry on the headland. There was a dizzy thrill in the thought of that outer side—a clean plunge to the foam that sucked and hissed in and out of the dark caverns below. Marya ate her dinner in sullen silence while her mother, from the roof, watched the *Western Maid* move slowly towards an entrance that was covered with snowy whitecaps on a sea like polished jasper. She could see the men on the beach dragging up their boats and tackle. She did not see, however, that Marya, her kerchief wrapped about her strong black hair, had fled up the street and was making her way over the hills towards the headland.

And none of those three ever divulged what Marya saw when she came under the lee of the Cyclopean Ruins.

Certainly Nora Grannard, when she finally reached Desmond Kahler's side again, never referred to it. Nora was face to face with the fact at last that Doctor Damocles did not understand it was only a game. It was not merely the sudden rush and roar of the wind coming upon them up there, and the sight of the yacht moving out to sea, leaving her behind, that struck Nora with horror. It was Doctor Paul Damocles suddenly revealing his broken sword. It was as though the hurricane had unloosed a brainstorm in the man's head. She tried to run away from him towards the mules which they had left down below and he flung her against the stones with the roughness of agonized despair.

"Hear me!" he shouted above the wind, as she crouched with her face averted in her hands. "I love thee! I am mad for thee. I will go with thee to thy country and——"

"But it's impossible!" she screamed. "Don't you understand? Oh, let me go. What shall I do? The boat's gone!" She turned on him desperately. "Look!" she cried. "You did that! Oh, Aunty!" she held out her arms towards the distant yacht now rounding the curve of the rocks below them. She had never been so alone in her life.

Doctor Damocles, his sword in his hand, stared at her in stupefied astonishment. In a single moment the whole fabric of his illusion had fallen. He comprehended that she had already forgotten his existence save as an encumbrance. Her terrified anger appalled him. And when she realized what he had in his hand she shrieked dreadfully. Nora, as she did this, was not nice to look at. Her painted little mouth was twisted, and the tears had made havoc of the mascara on her lashes. Even then she imagined that Paul was playing a game of his own, if not her game.

"You do not love, then?" he demanded in a choking voice.

She stamped her foot and flung out a hand towards the yacht.

"You try to keep me here, you miserable wretch, you! What do you think you are doing? My fiancé will have you jailed for this. Let me go. Oh, I wish I'd never come here," she wailed.

Doctor Damocles saw a kerchiefed figure bounding up the hillside and proceeded to show Nora that he was not playing a game after all. He drove the broken sword suddenly into his breast, under the collar bone, and stumbled, and then knelt, his head bowed over the hilt, while she stared at him in the horror of a slow awakening into a world of reality. She put her hand to her mouth and shrank back against the ancient stones, and a vision of the yacht, very tiny and pallid in a wine-dark sea, mingled with the lithe spring of a girl in a kerchief, who stood up suddenly and flung a broken sword in a wide curve into the depths.

Marya Soranza stood up without her kerchief, and her strong round arms were bare. She had torn off her sleeves to make a bandage, and now she stooped, after glancing at the Frankish girl without anger or even enmity, and lifted Doctor Paul in her arms. For a moment she balanced her load, and then she advanced towards where they had left the mules. Only once she paused and half turned to the other woman and made a gesture with her head to indicate that Nora must follow. But the expression on Marya's face was of an unfathomable placidity. As she strode forward with her heavy burden she seemed to be advancing with powerful strides towards the goal of her desire. There was a faint smile upon her lips as she reached the animals and turned to find Nora crumpled in a heap by her side, worn out with fright and emotion. Marya put Doctor Damocles carefully upon the broad platform on his mule's back. She lifted Nora Grannard easily and set her, with a sharp

guttural word of command in her ear, upon the other. And as the black squall fled away over the Ægean Sea and the *Western Maid* headed in towards the haven, Marya Soranza came down into Megalopolis with her charges and saw her mother on the roof hauling down the signals.

AT THE VILLA AGOSTINO

THE clients of Madame Despard's boarding house on Chartres Street, New Orleans, were mostly men who had stepped hastily from the gangways of fruit ships arriving from Caribbean ports. They were not furtive, it must be understood. Indeed, they were almost ostentatious in their manly challenge to authority. Their papers were very much in order. Sometimes those papers were the last thing they had attended to before abandoning their offices in the warm, humid scenes of their late activities. But they were unaffectedly glad when the cab put them down before the unpretentious *confiserie* in Chartres Street. To most of these stormy petrels of Latin America this was home.

Madame Despard's guests were usually men. Madame liked men. She was one of those women who are, quite apart from their sex and their business, interested in men. And she had a permanent boarder who was also interested in men. Señora Voight, a wealthy and retired spy, had the best room facing the patio, where Madame Despard's cats, four huge and gelded yellow animals, lay on the warm flagstones by the fountain like tigers reposing after a full meal of Christians. Señora Voight was no longer youthful, but her fancy for men younger than herself was unimpaired. Her last husband, fourth of his line, a handsome boy from Salvador, had deserted her not long before Mr. Harry Trancher and his chum Jack Ferrell, gentlemen adventurers, just in from Honduras on business, arrived in Chartres Street. It had been a blow, but women like

Señora Voight possess an emotional resiliency that would stagger Casanova. The señora revived as soon as she beheld Harry Trancher. She saw him from the gallery of the patio and smiled. That was the unfortunate part of Señora Voight—her smile. One of her teeth was formed of a square-cut diamond, and it gave her face a peculiar expression. It glittered. When she lit a cigar, as was her custom, after dinner, the match flare and the puff of smoke gave her mouth an appearance of luminous animosity.

Mr. Trancher, who was big and burly and had a round face with features of a homogenous pallor, as though they were moulded in gutta-percha, was disturbed at the close-up view he had of Señora Voight's flashing smile. He had never gotten used to women smoking cigars, either. He said as much to Jack Ferrell. Jack's weakness was girls. Mr. Trancher himself was a woman hater. He was devoted to his old mother in Bootle, England, and disapproved of Jack's philandering. And yet it was Jack who had the dreams. Since he was gassed on the Saloniki front Jack had had strange dreams.

They had left the freighter *Cuyahoga* at the foot of Calliope Street, where she had docked on arrival from Havana. They warned Madame that they were merely transients. Going to New York. Madame asked no questions. Most of her clients were transients on their way to New York. They described themselves as purchasing agents. And these two were Englishmen, they pointed out. Madame said she had another Englishman, a Mr. Brown. They could sit at his table.

They did. Mr. Brown's nationality was not immediately apparent. A man who has crossed Latin-American frontiers, two jumps ahead of a warrant for his arrest, for a number of years, becomes something of a cosmopolitan. Mr. Brown had experienced these reverses of fortune, and

he had also been a conductor on the Occidental Railway in Colombia, a school teacher in Bucaramanga, which is in the Departimento of Santander, and secretary to Señor Don Sebastian José Maria Canafistolo, whose extensive hacienda in the Maracaibo Basin had been described by geologists as a mere fertile crust on the surface of an illimitable lake of petroleum.

It was not Jack who listened to Mr. Brown's recital. Harry Trancher often regretted that Jack had no initiative. Since demobilization these two had wandered to and fro through Latin America. At some time prior to 1914 Mr. Trancher had been employed in some railroad shops in Venezuela. He had left under a cloud with very little to his credit save a working knowledge of Spanish. And somehow he and his chum Jack Ferrell, who had been gassed in the Struma Valley, and who seemed unable to hold a job very long nowadays, stuck together. It might have been affection, but there was no method by which either of these two derelicts of the war could express how they felt about it. But Jack left it to Harry. What Harry told him was good enough. He was big and very strong and light on his feet, and for a short spell he could fight with extraordinary ferocity. And then he would lose his wind.

It was Harry who schemed, and who now listened, like an intelligent dog, with his head on one side, to the sad history of Señor Brown. Jack lay back in the chair, his eyes fixed upon the dark blue night sky above the tiled roof of Madame Despard's, dreaming of his own queer fancies. Harry glanced at his chum at times. These lapses puzzled him. Jack should be getting better soon. Gas ought to be out of his lungs and brain by now. Take an interest in other things than skirts.

Mr. Brown's tale was an interminable monologue concerning the ingratitude of Señor Don Sebastian Canafis-

tolo. Would anybody believe such ingratitude existed? He asked Mr. Trancher. Four years of unremitting and almost incredible fidelity, during which Mr. Brown had saved that man millions, literally millions of francs, pesos, and bolivars, rewarded by the acceptance of his resignation. Conceive it! Impoverished!

Mr. Brown was not impressive in the ordinary sense. He had a long body and short legs, a large moustache and a still larger nose, and he was incapable of a smile. Unlike Señora Voight, his teeth were invisible at all times. He was undersized and undernourished. He expressed derision by a sound like a short bark. He was continually rising to his feet—a matter of a few inches—and his big nose seemed to cleave the air as his voice, nasally cavernous, rose also.

Mr. Trancher listened with extreme attention. Their last adventure, at Puerto Sanchez, which lies east of Truxillo in Honduras, had been profitable, but something fresh would have to turn up if he and Jack were not going to work. He listened. And the more he listened the better he liked the scheme. It was not that Jack disliked work. Jack would have gone cheerfully down to the Levée and gotten a job. Jack had very little sense. Mr. Trancher knew that the way to get on was to let work alone and use his head. Moreover, he was one of those men who cherished a genuine hatred of work. He knew his old mother in Bootle was proud of her son who was so successful abroad. He wrote letters on hotel paper alluding to his large affairs, and the old lady showed them round to her neighbours. He could scheme, however, and as Mr. Brown, moistened by glasses of Madame Despard's cognac, poured forth his tale, Harry listened with a quick-working brain.

It was impossible to say whether Mr. Brown was aware of this interest. He seemed to need only a listener. Dressed in an old but aggressively clean linen suit, diminutive,

hump-shouldered, pigeon-breasted, smoking innumerable cigarettes and drinking glass after glass of *anisette*, he held forth to the sympathetic Mr. Trancher.

"I have defended that man with my life!" he said more than once. "But for me he would have been begging his bread. Absolutely."

"So you said before," remarked Mr. Trancher soothingly. "Where's this place he took to living in?"

"The Villa San Agostino," said Mr. Brown, combing his moustache with an alarmingly long finger nail. Seen on that nicotine-stained finger it was like a talon. "It is up the Bocas del Teñorio, north of Santiago de Cuba."

"And he paid you off? I can't understand that," said Harry Trancher.

"Accepted my resignation," corrected Mr. Brown with a pompous air peculiar in one so small. "It was offered in the nature of a reprimand. I felt it my duty to call his attention to his way of life."

"Oh, way of life! I see, he's one of those old . . ."

"Absolutely," said Mr. Brown. "And under the circumstances I felt it my duty to . . ."

"Oh, instead of paying off the lady, he gave you the sack? Humph. Hard lines."

"He added insult to injury," said Mr. Brown. "He offered to continue my salary on condition that I left the Villa Agostino. Banished!"

"Well, I wish somebody would insult me that way," muttered Harry Trancher, frowning and thinking very hard. "What are you complaining about?—that's what I'd like to know."

"I have my pride, I suppose," snarled Mr. Brown, rising to his feet and sitting down again. "I would rather starve than take one peso from him now."

"Oh, of course. But listen. This old gentleman's pretty rich, then?"

"Rich!" squeaked Brown, and he gave his short derisive bark. "Beyond the dreams of avarice. Due to me! If it hadn't been for me, he'd have been . . ."

"And he lives all alone?"

"A couple of Cuban servants, who rob him right and left, and a chauffeur whom I caught practising his master's signature to sign checks with. When I reported him, the old fool said he would enjoy Antoine's surprise when he presented the check and found the account closed."

"Oh, then he don't keep his money in a bank?" said Mr. Trancher.

"In Paris, in a vault," barked Mr. Brown. "And in a strong room in the Villa Agostino. Oh, the madness of it! Only he and I know the combination. Yet I've seen that long-legged body snatcher Anastasia looking at the door of that room as though she could drill it with her eyes."

"Who's she?" asked Mr. Trancher.

"Oh, she's gone now," muttered Mr. Brown. "She had her day and ceased to be. Now . . ." And Mr. Brown's querulous voice tailed off into silence.

"That was your work, I suppose," hinted his companion. Mr. Brown's bark became more than derisive. It was sardonic. To hear such a sound, like a detonation, come from so small a man was surprising.

"For my sins, I suppose, yes. Better if I had left her alone. And yet . . ."

Harry Trancher glanced at the somnolent Jack Ferrell. All this was nothing to Jack. He sized up Mr. Brown once more.

"Ah," he said. "I see." He did not see, but he knew that something would come of it if he only waited. Something did.

"Always before," went on Mr. Brown, looking up beyond MadameDespard's roof to the Louisiana sky. It was a night in August, when the very stars seem swollen with heat, and the palm fronds are motionless. "Always before they had been like that Anastasia. From Paris and Monte Carlo. Old warriors. *Café-chantant* brigadiers. He had lived his life. Now he began to look round. He saw something he wanted."

Mr. Trancher was not following. He knew there was something in all this useful to him, but the meaning was obscure. Mr. Brown—ah, Mr. Brown. . . . Now, what was there in Mr. Brown's tones to suggest a key to all this rumty-tum?

"Something special, eh?" he remarked casually, yet in a tone that conveyed an experienced familiarity with special things. Mr. Brown, his mouth open and his pale eyes appearing large and vacant on either side of his big nose, might have been a.fish in an aquarium, looking out at Mr. Trancher. He spoiled the illusion by uttering his short bark.

"A goddess!" he said contemptuously and looked away. In the darkness the form of Señora Voight could be discerned across the patio, the glowing end of her cigar describing a short arc in the gloom as she rocked to and fro.

The information caused Mr. Trancher's thoughts to swerve wildly. His mind swung to the edge of its normal runway and skittered over unfamiliar ground. Ho! he said to himself. It's goddesses, now. Blimey! He was farther away than ever. Old warriors and *café-chantant* brigadiers were translatable into something Mr. Trancher could comprehend. But goddesses were something else again.

"Peach, eh?" he offered tentatively. Peaches are not necessarily goddesses, but a goddess, Mr. Trancher thought, might come down to earth as a peach. Mr. Brown growled.

"Why, is he going to marry her?" demanded Mr. Trancher.

Mr. Brown moved as though stung. He rose and sat down again. And then he became calm.

"He is. And he will then be a dead man within a few hours," he said in a hollow tone.

"You mean she's going to bump him off like that? He's that infatuated he don't . . ." Mr. Trancher stared and fell into a flabbergasted silence.

"She will be the richest widow in Cuba," said Mr. Brown, and he put another cigarette into his long holder. "It is a plot, and he is too—as you say—infatuated to see it. It was because I warned him that I found it necessary to resign. She has a lover."

"Who's 'she'?" asked the mystified Mr. Trancher. "Oh, you mean the girl he's going to marry. The goddess, eh? H'm!"

It occurred to him that this behaviour, though it might seem outrageous to Señor Brown, was in character. Harry Trancher had won a scholarship when he was thirteen. He had had two years at a grammar school in Liverpool. Waste of time, in his opinion. But he recalled the habits of goddesses. He pondered. A strong room in the Villa Agostino!

Suddenly Harry Trancher got up and began pacing to and fro. He became aware of Señor Voight's cigar glowing in the darkness where she sat in her rocking chair. Madame Despard's hints became clear. There was something in the air between Señora Voight and Señor Brown. Madame Despard had said, "Señor Brown, he should have someone to look after him," and Harry had imagined she was sweet on that pompous little scarecrow herself. No, he and Jack were keeping the señora away from her new fancy. . . .

Harry Trancher strolled round to the other side of the gallery. There was a rustle as he tapped at the tall lacquered

screen and the flash of the diamond tooth as the señora smiled. A powerful Latin perfume, heavy and disturbing to an Englishman, enveloped his senses.

"Señor?" she said lightly. "I am glad you came over to see me. Let us talk. In Spanish? All right. Seat yourself."

"Yes," she went on, beginning to rock again. "He told me. The poor man! He is well out of that business. I have heard of Don Sebastian Canafistolo. An eccentric. Now he is going to marry a poor Cuban girl with a lover."

"It is my idea," said Mr. Trancher, "that it might be prevented by—someone else, who is not Señor Brown. It might be worth while."

"Ah!" The tooth flashed at him in the darkness. "Yes, I dare say a man of resource and courage would find it worth while."

"I thought perhaps the señora had learned more of the matter than I," he remarked.

"Yes, Señor Brown also loves this creature."

"*Caramba!*"

"Yes. That is a fact. Another infatuation. She has a voice, he says. Marvellous! Divine! Pooh! I expect she is what we call in Germany a *backfisch*. A Lorelei."

"Ah. Well, how would you say a man of resource and courage could do anything with such a problem? It sounds prickly to me."

"More than it is. You have a small town in the canefields. Merchants go there to sell goods. Her lover travels in jewelry. Strangers go in and out without remark. The Villa Agostino is just outside. There are ships and a sugar mill. The railway runs as far as Maravilla, across the bay."

"Señora, you seem to know . . . You have an interest in Señor Brown? Well, that is a fine idea. I myself now—would you say Madame Despard could do with a little capital in her business here? A sleeping partner?"

"More than possible," returned Señora Voight. "A man of resource and courage could do a lot that way if he had the little capital."

"If he had the little capital. And they say this Don Sebastian has more than a little?"

"Seventy million bolivars at least."

"*Por Dios!* There must be a way. I think my friend and I will be going through this Cabanes very soon."

"Go with God, señor. Only, come back to New Orleans."

"Of course. With the little capital. Speak a good word for me, señora."

That night he carried on a whispered conversation with Jack Ferrell after they were in bed, each concealed from the other beneath a ghostly mosquito bar depending from the tall ceiling. It was almost a monologue, for Jack was in one of those silent dreamy moods of his which usually preceded his disappearance for a few days. Mr. Trancher was in dread of one of these outbreaks in New Orleans. He wished to get away from the United States before Jack got stewed again.

"What's your hurry?" asked Jack.

"Don't you set that netting on fire," warned Harry. "My hurry's this, Jack. That *comandante* in jail up in Tegucigalpa, when he comes out he'll be looking for blood. There's a couple Hondurans here in this house now. I don't trust anybody too far. This thing looks big, and I'll need you, you know. You aren't asleep, are you? Well, now, just listen to me. There's a boat leaves here for Santiago Saturday. Passenger boat. We'll get a job spud skinning, I guess. It's only three days. We'll sling our hooks there and make for Maravilla."

"We'll get our heads bashed in," mumbled Jack.

"You've got head bashing on the brain," remarked

Harry. "Why can't you pull yourself together and think of something cheerful?"

He listened a moment. There was no sound, only a violent trembling of the other bed.

"There now, there now!" said Harry, stretching out his hand. "I'm only joking, Jack. Forget it. Hey! Stop it, can't you?" He leaped out of bed and, pouring some ice water over a towel, put it over the other man's head. "Now, then! Is that better? I'm here, you silly fool!"

It had been the same after the Puerto Sanchez affair. Jack had whimpered like a puppy. The Struma Valley had been too much for Jack. He dreamed even now of what he had seen there. Woke up screaming sometimes.

Harry soothed him and got back under his netting.

"It's a job where we've got to have tact. You know what tact is, Jack, don't you?"

Harry listened. There was a faint humming under the net next to him. Jack was all right again. He was trying to sing. Harry smiled.

"Tact, tact, take it for a fact!
If you kiss the tradesman's baby
You will find that it will act—
You can do a lot of things with
Tact, tact, tact!"

"There you are," he said. "Well, that's our middle name when we get to Cabanes. Don't say you won't come, Jack. You aren't asleep, are you? Eh? What? Oh! Of course we'll come back here. What do you want to come back for?"

There was a giggling sound from Jack.

"Oh, I see. Jack, you're a fast worker. But don't forget. Saturday we sail for Cabanes."

Cabanes was a sugar port built out on a spit projecting

from the farther side of a small landlocked lagoon. It was practically inland. The sterns of sugar ships crashed into the trees and bushes on the banks of the channel leading into that lagoon when they took the bends with the rudder hard over. A little farther to the eastward of Cabanes was San Agostino, on another little cape, where the officials had made a sort of residential suburb, connected with the town by a road round the curve of the bay.

It was a place, this Cabanes, where work never stopped save for a couple of months at the end of the season, when they worked harder than ever, getting ready for the harvesting of the cane. The huge gaunt mill, Cabanes Central, with its ten tall stacks like the teeth of a black comb, stood up against the sky and dominated everything around. It was the heart of the district. Through its mighty ventricles and auricles pulsed the lifeblood of Cabanes, the muddy-looking liquor of the giant crushers. You heard them far away, through the night, uttering their heavy inexorable grunt and whine. The windows of the mill shook as they shone with the fleering blue-white radiance of arc lights high over the machinery. The arms of great fly wheels swung radial and enormous shadows across the palm trees lining the track to the offices. The trainloads of cane came jangling in, heralded by interminable squeals from an invisible locomotive far beyond the level crossing. Brakemen swung lanterns in rhythmic arcs, and a bell on the crossing gates snarled a warning to drunken boiler men who were trying to crawl over the grinding couplers.

Cabanes, in short, was a little segment of North America set down on the edge of vast rolling fields of cane. Three eight-hour shifts and the brains of many scientists produced twice a month the cargo to fill the sugar ships which squirmed through the Bocas del Teñorio and tied up at the Central Jetty. Two thousand men, black, white, brown, and

yellow, with their women and children, dwelt in the streets of wooden shanties at the back of the spit, where the land melted into black ooze and cane brakes whence came the booming of frogs and the thin, terrifying music of mosquitoes. Central's scientists would deal with them too, in time. A squat sand-sucker lay at the end of a long snaky flume and pumped sludge behind lines of wired stakes. Meanwhile there was much of what might be called "perdition" in the streets just beyond the soppy foreshore back of the spit. The crew of the sugar ships would go in there and the Cuban policemen would do the rest. Welcome Clubs, consisting of a canvas booth with a tungsten lamp over the door and a screened back portion, offered the jack ashore a chance to be cleaned out. Saloons with mechanical pianos, whose keys cachinnated under a glass case like the teeth of a death's head, offered whiskey of detonating potency. Women so awful in their hungry squalor that they darkened their cabins and sat out in the humid night, waited for the men who came weaving in and out of the wooden colonnades of Front Street. Now and again, past the insistent scuffle of the dance hall floors and the glare of the saloons, a Chinaman would pass, with his long slitted eyes watchful for the wallet snatcher and the outthrust boot of the lordly white men with a sense of humour. Chinese boys like ivory statues endowed with an alluring yet sexless vitality could be seen in the mill, scooping the amber crystals from the centrifugals. Cabanes was Cosmopolis on a small scale, like a drop of dirty water seen through a microscope, strange, awful, interesting, and full of corruption. But the village of San Agostino was the exact opposite of this. It was like a little heaven. And at the far side of the cape, with no sign of commerce in view save the ruby light of the oil jetty at night, was the Villa Agostino.

The Villa had no connection with the rest of the world. It was rather a mansion, full of immense *salas* and reverberating corridors. A French millionaire, so they said, had built it for his own declining years. Another story had it that he was but the agent for a European monarch whose throne was tottering and who proposed to slip away and spend his period of abdication in this remote seclusion. So the tales went to and fro over the dinner tables on the double-screened verandas of the Cabanes officials in San Agostino. The royalty theory was supported by the tall conical chimney of the Villa Agostino, designed to carry off the fumes from scores of charcoal ranges set in the blue and ivory porcelain of the kitchen. But the place stood empty for years. The European monarch was still perched on his tottery throne. And then Señor Don Canafistolo materialized, and a reign of ravishing scandal ensued.

The señor was elderly and apparently extremely wealthy. He was small, with a trim gray napoleon and an upstanding brush of white hair. He dressed principally in gray alpaca, and was attended by another smaller man with a large nose, also in alpaca, who sat forward in the carriage as though ready to spring at the throat of any venturesome mendicant. This was Mr. Brown, Señor Brown, B. A., St. John's College, Oxford, England, graduate of Latin-American affairs. He was viceroy, steward, seneschal, secretary, paymaster, major-domo, and adjutant general. Ladies arriving from Ventimiglia, where Señor Don Canafistolo had a villa on the Riviera, were met in Havana by Señor Brown and convoyed, with a minimum of conversation, to the Villa Agostino. Stores were purchased by Señor Brown in Santiago and brought round in the yacht scandalously called the *Messalina*. When the ladies gave battle to each other in some distant wing of the place, as

they sometimes did (being elemental creatures and not always well educated) Señor Brown separated them and, if necessary, paid them off. To tell the truth, he rather liked the job. It gratified his opinion of himself to see so much wickedness flaunting itself amid the rot of tropical vegetation. He felt that it contrasted well with his own incorruptible integrity.

It was this austere quality in the Señor Brown which had led to his misfortune. He had had misunderstandings with Latin-American officials in his day, but not over women. No scandal had stained his record. It would scarcely suffice to say that Señor Brown had never loved, but he had forgotten them. When he saw Jovita Barreira, the postmistress of Cabanes, he became the duelling ground of passion and fidelity. Don Sebastian made his major-domo the messenger of his own love. Señor Brown was not long in perceiving the scheme of which the infatuated millionaire was to be a victim. She was a goddess even to Señor Brown, but when he poured out his declaration in booming clangorous Spanish she shook her head and called to the back of the office. And Emilio Gonzales, her lover, rose up behind her and looked steadily down upon the diminutive major-domo. It was at this point the latter made his mistake. He permitted them to discover that he was aware of their plan. It was a mistake because the girl complained to Don Sebastian that she feared Señor Brown. The señor had threatened her. And Don Sebastian, in a rage of jealousy storming over the old walls of his sagacity, dismissed his incorruptible employee.

"Your salary shall be paid on condition that you do not return," Señor Brown was told.

"There will be nothing to return to," he had retorted sourly. "I issue this last warning. I have my pride. Nothing

shall induce me to put my pension in jeopardy. For it is a pension for faithful service you are giving me. You try to deceive yourself, but you cannot deceive me. I am, I am free to say, indispensable to you. . . ."

He went, and Jovita Barreira, whom he had called a goddess, and who had thrown a charm over Don Sebastian which seemed destined to place her one of these days in possession of the seventy million bolivars, was pursuing the even tenor of her way, when Harry Trancher and his friend Jack Ferrell, gentlemen adventurers, moved forward upon the Villa Agostino.

Emilio Gonzales, when he looked up from his seat, which was a well-filled mail sack in a dark corner of the Cabanes post office, wondered very much indeed what those two big men, regular bad *hombres* in his opinion, were doing in Cabanes. He saw them side by side at the window, which was barred like a cage, and the electric light overhead, kept burning by special permission of the government, shone on their faces. Emilio thought of a visit he had once paid to the Zoological Gardens in North America. Then he remembered a more unfortunate experience, when he went to see a friend who had been locked up in connection with a murder he had witnessed. Emilio, invisible in his corner, studied Harry Trancher and Jack Ferrell and told himself that certainly there stood two bad *hombres*. He heard them demand a money order for fifty pesos. He saw Jovita, his Jovita, who was as pure a Spaniard as anyone in Cuba, yet who fooled everybody with her short auburn hair and shrewd light gray-green eyes, make out the necessary forms.

Jovita worked as post-office clerk under protest. She had often told Emilio with some sternness that he, a travelling jewel salesman, had absolutely no idea of the vastness of her ambition. To sing in opera was with Jovita a pro-

found, almost a fundamental, obsession of the soul. It never occurred to her that four out of five girls in America, North, South, Central, and including the West Indies archipelago, had the same trouble of the spirit, the same passionate feeling of frustration when they contemplated their daily tasks.

She made out the forms efficiently, sullenly, and without looking at the two big men who were watching her. She did not see Mr. Trancher, who was sending the fifty pesos to his mother in Bootle, nudge Mr. Ferrell and indicate with a flicker of an eyelash the healthy roll of gold-backed currency within reach of Jovita's left hand. Emilio Gonzales saw it, however, and his impression of the two as poor company for his Jovita deepened. He also moved slightly on his mail-bag cushion, as though to render access to the broad belt, which supported a very handsome pair of riding breeches, a little more easy.

Yes, Jovita was not going to do this all her life. With a voice like hers . . . Emilio, even while he watched his sweetheart at the post-office window, pondered the problem. She *had* a voice. If you had never heard it you were startled out of your customary cool and patronizing attitude towards post-office lady-clerks. She was by way of being a tall elegant girl, physically solid though slender, and most men, when they gave the matter any thought at all, wanted to protect Jovita from the rough world. Even Emilio Gonzales, who was in love with Jovita, had wished to treat her like one of his own jewels, shaping and polishing her hard, brilliant character, and setting it firmly within the sterling metal of his own personality. He lived in Santiago, that beautiful dirty town which lies at the head of a wonderful winding harbour south across the cane lands from Cabanes, and he was planning to open a store there instead of riding all over Cuba on horseback and

selling from door to door. This last was a profitable business, but it was fatiguing and, if the truth were known, dangerous.

But she had a voice. It was so powerful, even as she spoke, that people would regard her with incredulity when they heard the resonant sound, like the echo of a golden gong, coming from that sombre, rather stand-offish young person. When she sang, which was rarely indeed since she came to Cabanes, the volume of sound filled the chamber as though the windows were suddenly opened upon a square thronged with a cymbal-clashing army.

But since those two men had come in Jovita had not uttered a sound. Harry Trancher had asked her for a foreign money order, and she had handed him the form to fill up. He was evidently familiar with such documents. The other man's eyes wandered and then settled upon her with a look that she was aware of without looking at him. She knew he could not see Emilio Gonzales at the back of the office because of the bright light.

When Jack Ferrell looked at a girl as he was looking at Jovita, it gave him a refined expression. Jack roamed the world dreamily, with half of his brain clouded, yet he sought something, he knew not what, which might bring back to him the secret he had known in youth. It was this which Harry Trancher sensed in their relations, an obscure feeling that these lawless expeditions of his were to Jack something else. They were. To Jack there was a little of the pilgrimage in their journeys. He had a look on his long sad face at times, that at the next corner, over the next hill, behind the next island, his faded blue eyes would see what he sought, the secret which no racking of his tired brain could solve.

So he looked at women as though to say: "Is it you? Have you got it? Can I have you?" So he looked at Jovita

Barreira, and a moment later almost imperceptibly, and while Harry was glancing at him warningly, he shook his head. The expression passed like a shadow, like a sigh.

Harry Trancher smiled as he handed over the fifty dollars which was to go to Bootle, England.

"A stamp, please, señorita, for Inglaterra."

Jovita looking up sullenly, saw a worn and bulging wallet in Mr. Trancher's hands. Her quick eye caught sight of a brilliant orange-coloured five-centavo stamp of Spanish Honduras as Mr. Trancher drew out a fresh clean envelope addressed to Mrs. Trancher. When she received it she would say to her neighbours, "My son's doing awfully well in America." There had been a letter from New Orleans with five hundred dollars and a photograph of Harry made in a Canal Street studio.

"Money for my old mother in England, señorita," he said, glancing at her deferentially. He thought of Señor Brown and what Señora Voight had told him of the woman at the post office. He saw that she was that sort of tart. Had a headpiece. But he was startled when she said, in a deep, strong voice:

"You come from Honduras?"

"Señorita?"

She frowned and almost turned to speak to Emilio Gonzales. She was recalling an official report of a few weeks back when the railway express office at Puerto Sanchez, which lies eastward of Ceiba on the lonely coast of Honduras, was the scene of a fight between the crew of an American freighter and a dozen of the local soldiery, mostly drunk, and the mail-car strong-box was found open and empty. The news in the course of time reached even Cabanes in eastern Cuba. Jovita examined those two big men sharply.

"Señorita?"

"I know you!" She squared her arms on the desk, secure in the presence of Emilio Gonzales behind her. "This is not Puerto Sanchez, señores."

At the mention of that place Jack Ferrell took his gaze from a map of the Caribbean Sea and looked at his friend. Harry Trancher's chin was against his chest, and he glanced sharply from under his frowning eyebrows.

"That so? My name isn't Señor Brown either," he muttered as he stowed his wallet away. "Come on, Jack. Let's take a little walk."

"That's a nice piece," said Jack as they set out along Front Street. "I'm goin' to see if she'll come out some evening."

"No, you're not, Jack. Don't you remember? That's the girl I told you about. She's the one who's fixing to be a widow. We're going to stop it, see? Get some oof for it, too."

"Bash her on the head, shall we?"

"You wait and don't go bashing till I say so," warned Mr. Trancher. "My gracious, it's hot here. Let's have a schooner of *cerveza*."

"Did you hear her voice?" asked Jack. He looked as though he had caught a glimpse, an astonishing glimpse, of another world, before the door had been slammed in his face.

"Did I hear it?" snarled Harry, pushing into a saloon with a zinc bar gleaming in the green and gold dusk of closed shutters. "It was like a dock master's."

Jovita Barreira whirled round upon Emilio Gonzales, still sitting on his mail bag in the dark office.

"You saw those men?" she whispered hoarsely.

"I did not understand. What is this Puerto Sanchez you shouted at him?"

"I shout? I didn't know I shouted. I saw it in the

notificacions," she said, reaching for a large clip file above her head. She turned the dusty sheets and then handed it to him with a quick movement towards a light on the wall. He read.

"The *comandante* was the instigator and is now in prison," he said, returning the file and switching off the light.

Jovita shrugged her fine shoulders in reply to Emilio's glance of inquiry.

"He has a Honduras stamp in with his money," she said. "And you heard what he said? He spoke of Señor Brown. When did he hear of that shrimp Señor Brown? Emilio, I don't like those two coming here."

"Two bad *hombres*, I said to myself when they came in," said Emilio. "What is to be done?"

"Have a care."

Seen in a good light, Emilio Gonzales was a handsome young man. He had a full dark eye, not overly straight lips, and a neat little moustache. He wore a fine gray sombrero. A large diamond on his little finger and a fine pearl pin in his scarf gave him a romantic, distinguished air. He moved with an extraordinary quietness and caution. Every fourth week he came to Cabanes on his round of visits from Santiago, where he planned to have a store of his own. And in a silent, enigmatic fashion he was the lover of Jovita Barreira, when Don Sebastian Canafistolo came to the Villa Agostino and one day set his large black eyes upon the girl at the post office.

It was like Jovita to keep Emilio out of the way. It was like him to remain in the background. If Don Sebastian could be brought to give her a musical education, *Por Dios*, would not that be a fine thing? There was nothing more in it than that before the astute Señor Brown received the report of Lo Foo, who worked in the kitchen of the Villa Agostino

under old Clotilde. Lo Foo had been born in Cabanes, and he had a face in colour and shape like a pancake. He lay flat on the outer ledge of the sea wall by the oil jetty and heard Jovita say to Emilio:

"I could marry that old man, and in a few years—oh, Emilio!"

"If you marry him I will put a bullet into his head," Emilio had said softly.

"And they would execute you!"

Lo Foo saw the man's hand close on Jovita's throat, and she uttered a gurgling noise.

"And I would drive a knife into you just for that, my Jovita."

She lay quiet under his hand for a moment, and he released her. Lo Foo was disappointed. He had expected to see the knife sink into that tall white girl's neck.

"Emilio, you are a fool."

"That may be. I know thee, Jovita."

"I joked. I mean about the execution."

"And you still think you can marry him as he desires?"

"And if by sad chance he was shot, as you say he might be—oh, Emilio."

There was a pause in the darkness. Lo Foo saw them embrace. These *caballeros!*

"You are a clever girl, my Jovita," said Emilio. "I am afraid of thee, sometimes."

Now, when the doorway was no longer darkened by those two bad *hombres*, they looked at each other in doubt. Suddenly the girl snapped her thumb and finger and uttered a long booming exclamation.

"Emilio, we must act at once! I go to the Villa to-night to dinner with Don Sebastian—yes, I know, but he must never become informed of your existence. I have made that my attitude from the beginning—a poor girl whose sole

desire is to sing. So I go there as usual. He sends his car. But Señor Brown knew of you by some of his spies and told Don Sebastian. He refused to believe it. He dismissed the poor shrimp. Now these . . ." She rested her chin on her clenched fist for a moment.

"You mean you are going to abandon me?" said Emilio quietly. "The first thing he will demand of you is to leave this place."

"Wait, let me think," she muttered, resting one hand on his shoulder. "These two have come from Señor Brown." She kept her steady eye on Emilio Gonzales. "To avenge him. They are two desperate men. That other one—he had a lunatic expression on his face. Kill and rob."

"'You will be in danger, Jovita."

"Let me think! You must come up to the Villa to-night. I am going to tell Don Sebastian two men have been here and threatened my life. I dare not return. He must let me stay. You understand?"

"Yes, I understand, Jovita. And you understand too, I suppose, that if I come up there I shall kill him."

"Tchah! I said you were a fool. There will be no need. . . . I stay with old Clotilde. To-morrow, oh, Emilio!"

They stepped out of the club, those two men, into the moonlight, and seemed at once to become legendary figures of the night. The white concrete walk, raised a foot above the earth, was crossed by the shadows of palm and cactus so solid they seemed like ebony inlay on ivory. They moved athwart this magical marquetry and seemed to take on the semblance of tormented marionettes, their gestures exaggerated into the dreadful shapes of their alarming and derisive shadows. Something of this necromancy touched their minds as they went on towards San Agostino. Out on the solid curving whiteness of the causeway round the

shore their footsteps shocked them. The sound, compared with the whisper of the waves on the sand, seemed profane.

"Harry," said Jack plaintively, "why didn't you let me bash that dago when he insulted you?"

"Because he'd got two dam' long guns on his hips, Jack, and he was looking for a chance to do us in. What's an insult, Jack? You'll have a chance to bash him by and by. We've got to call on Don Canafistolo first."

"That's a jaw-breaking name, Harry."

"Well, you've got to remember it. He's the old boy we're going to do a good turn to."

They approached San Agostino. The suburb lay before them like a huge dark crouching figure with one red, unwinking eye, which was the signal on the oil jetty. As they drew near, the subdued lights of lamps shining behind the screens of verandas reassured them. The perfume of flowers hung heavy in the air. The fireflies sparkled like the facets of an enormous and invisible jewel. Slow moving beetles, crossing the paths, appeared to be carrying on their foreheads intolerable burdens of light, setting out upon voyages of fabulous discovery.

"There," said Harry Trancher. "That's it. I was over there last night. See it. Villa Agostino."

Old Clotilde, bending over a charcoal brazier in the enormous vaulted kitchen, saw Lo Foo pause in his sweeping. She was preparing after-dinner coffee.

"Some one goes along the path to the garden," he murmured. "Strangers."

"I did not hear them," she mumbled.

Lo Foo did not reply. The *caballeros* and their señoras were strange to him. Sounds and sights escaped them constantly which were familiar to him. He had heard two men and said so. He went on sweeping. His flat lids hung low

over his eyes. Nobody had ever seen Lo Foo's eyes. Even his ears were covered by his long straight black hair. When old Clotilde went along the corridor with the coffee for Don Sebastian and that big white señorita, the men who had gone past might drive a knife into the old woman's neck. He had seen men do this in fights. When they fell they grunted, and he wondered whether Clotilde would grunt. He went on sweeping.

To Lo Foo things were going very strangely. There was the señorita's lover hidden away in that summerhouse overlooking the water at the end of the garden. He had come up while dinner was in progress and tiptoed along, looking in at the window where the old don was sitting at one end of the long table and the beautiful señorita at the other. And then he had crept past and across the garden, Lo Foo watching through the slits of his eyelids, and vanished into the belvedere. And now two more men. Big, heavy men, by the sound of their feet. Strangers. Lo Foo paused in his sweeping and closed his eyes for a moment as a slight vertigo seized him. He had imagined them catching him when he was unawares. Lo Foo's imagination was very powerful. He was obsessed by a dream he had once had of a man killed and hidden in a load of cane. The cane was lifted out in slings of shining chain and began to pass up the ramp into the crushers. Somehow Lo Foo saw himself in there, helpless, moving on toward the vast cruel rumble of the steel rollers. He had seen the juice cascading down below them, reddish-brown liquor flowing away to the vats. And he would close his eyes. . . .

So he closed them now, but only for a moment. He perceived in a flash that the two men had come to kill the *caballero* who sold cheap jewelry in Cabanes and who had fled to the summerhouse in the garden. For some reason,

obscure to himself and to the world, Lo Foo cherished a liking for Emilio Gonzales. He had pondered upon the manners of white men as he watched the lovers. Their lips would be pressed together and there would be a sound like the wave on the sand—*Tss—tss!* That other *caballero* who had gone away, Señor Brown, had ground his teeth when Lo Foo had reported this detail of Jovita's meeting with her lover. Lo Foo had been mystified. His excellency had been furiously angry and then had given Lo Foo an extra two dollars. Thinking of all this Lo Foo stepped out into the witchery of the Cuban night.

Over the trees of San Agostino the sky reflected the glare of Cabanes. Across the lagoon, in long horizontal streaks, like the marks of charcoal on blue vellum, lay the smoke from the mill stacks burning cane trash. Lo Foo regarded the scene with satisfaction. He had never been farther than Maravilla, across the outer bay, and his education was more or less rudimentary, but he experienced a mysterious happiness in such scenes of exquisite loveliness. If it were not for the *caballeros* and their peculiar habits the world to Lo Foo would have been a celestial place. He stepped silently, like a shadow, towards the summerhouse in the garden.

Emilio Gonzales was in a state of some perturbation as he sat, on a seat where he and Jovita had often spent the evening when the villa was empty, and meditated upon the events of the day. Emilio was a young man accustomed to looking after himself. The cane country is full of tough characters who would look upon a travelling jewelry salesman as an easy proposition. A Haitian Negro had once been found shot dead beside a grazing mule on the road leading out of Maravilla, and it is possible Emilio Gonzales, had he been interrogated, might have explained the matter. But this was something rather out of his way. He was fully

aware of the uproar following a rich man's sudden death. Cuba would be ringing with it. The more he reflected the less he liked the attitude of Jovita. He wasn't at all certain he himself was capable of what she expected. It flooded his mind with darkness to remember that she was even now in the Villa Agostino telling her story. And then those two bad *hombres* coming had simplified the problem in a way. He had left them drinking beer in the club, but he knew they were on their way.

He looked up at a faint sound and saw that the indigo square of the open window frame contained a head and shoulders. He drew one of his long pearl-handled pistols.

"Señor," came a hoarse whisper, "let me come in and tell you something. It is only Lo Foo."

"What do you want?" asked Emilio. "Who told you I was here to-night?"

"I hear you. I see you, señor. Señor, there are two men come into the house just now. What do they want? Is it the señorita they want?"

"You see them?" he demanded.

"And hear too," replied Lo Foo. He was squatting in the darkness of the room below the window. "Clotilde has taken in the coffee. The señorita is singing for his excellency. It is a song of great sorrow."

"Is it?" muttered Emilio. "Go on, *chico*. I am coming into the villa. Show me those two men."

He went down the steps to the garden and paused in astonishment. He heard Jovita singing. Her voice filled the blue darkness with ecstasy:

> "*A te, che l'alma mia*
> *Sol chiede, sol desia—*
> *Io t'amo, il guiro, io t'amo*
> *D'immenso, eterno amor!*"

"Señor," whispered the poor *chico*, "it sounds like the blessed angels in heaven."

The piano accompaniment ceased, and Emilio became aware of a struggle going on in the darkness. Some one was sobbing, and there was a sound of desperately heavy breathing. Suddenly a man tore down the path towards the pergola. Emilio Gonzales heard an exasperated voice calling:

"Bash! I'll bash you, you——" The sobbing eased, and died down.

"Shoot, señor," whispered Lo Foo. "He is there by the Villa. Shoot!"

Emilio Gonzales fired twice. There was a scuttering among the shrubs, and lights began to go up in the rooms of the Villa Agostino.

"Go in and tell the señorita I am outside," said Emilio in a low tone. "Tell her I have driven the murderers away. Tell her, too, that there is no danger any more."

But it was Don Sebastian Canafistolo, with a heavy automatic in his hand, who took the message from Lo Foo and peered out into the garden.

"Excellency," said Lo Foo. "The señor out there fought those men single-handed, and they have fled. They were about to murder Clotilde and climb into the Villa. He has saved all our lives, Excellency."

"Who is this person?" demanded Don Sebastian. "Bring him in. Who are you?" he asked Emilio, and stroked his imperial.

"Your excellency!" said Emilio Gonzales, slipping his long pearl-handled gun into his belt. "I am a man who has done you a service. Señor Brown, who hated me because the señorita did me the honour of loving me, may have mentioned Emilio Gonzales, the jeweller from Santiago.

I am that man. Señor Brown, in my opinion, sent those men to kill and rob."

"You mean," said Don Sebastian, lighting a cigarette, "that I am under an obligation to you, Señor Gonzales!"

"It might be put that way, Excellency," replied Emilio, with a quiet glance at Jovita. "To the señorita, also. It was her idea."

And when two gentlemen adventurers, back once more in New Orleans, hurried from the foot of Calliope Street to Chartres and put up at Madame Despard's, they found Señor Brown and the Señora Voight no longer there. Madame Despard told them the tale. She gave them the best room, Señora Voight's room in the old days, and listened to their adventures.

"He's had a nervous breakdown, madame. He'll have to rest a while. Fell down and hit himself on the head. I had a job getting him to a hospital. You know, madame, he's never been the same since the war. So they got married, did they?" he added, referring to Señor Brown.

"Living at the Hotel Bolivar in New York," said madame. "Do you know, Mr. Trancher, Mr. Brown's very rich."

"Rich? Why, do you mean to say . . ." began Harry Trancher. She nodded.

"He had a trunk full of securities, Señora Voight told me. He married her to have somebody take care of it, if you ask me."

"Well, I'm——" he glanced at Jack Ferrell drowsing in a hammock. "The dirty, underhand little shrimp! Said he'd rather starve. I say," he went on, "I wish I had a reason like that for getting married."

"Why, Mr. Trancher, I'm surprised," said Madame Despard. "The señora told me you were a wonderful man.

And I think so too, the way you look after poor Mr. Ferrell."

"Now—now!" said Harry Trancher. "Be yourself, madame. But it only shows you what I might do if I had a real object in life. Somehow, I've never felt that way before."

But the next evening when he went to find Jack and tell him what he was going to do, and how there would always be a home for him now, Jack was gone. And they never saw him again. He was on his way, was Jack, outward bound to the isles of the Chiriqui Lagoon, to Bluefields and the Spanish Main. Asprawl on some coconut schooner you might find him, or stoking a stern-wheel freighter up the Magdalena with armfuls of wood as she thumps her way past Barranca Vermeja and Remolino. He is on his way, seeking another glimpse of the world he has lost and the heaven he may some day win. And sometimes they find him sobbing softly in the darkness when he remembers with aching brain the voice of the señorita across the odorous darkness outside the Villa Agostino.

RELEASE

IN THE days of Greekish rule, the Passage Kraemer, running clean through the great Hotel Kraemer, was the thorax of Smyrna. Through that high vaulted corridor came a steady stream of men and women of all the nations of Europe and the Levant. It led from the Rue Parallel behind the hotel, and it came out upon the wide stone quay beyond whose clean bright solidity sparkled the green waters of the Gulf. There was more in the selection of this route from the upper quarters of the city and the busy Rue Frank than mere convenience and speed. The people came that way in obedience to an obscure desire for comfort and the social atmosphere of the Passage. It was a little world, open at both ends, and having in the centre the great curving staircase that led up into the hotel above. To the right, facing the sea, was a large café. There was the money changer's booth close to the stairs. There were shops that sold sweetmeats and cigarettes, a barber's shop where officers could be seen in the luxurious chairs. And besides all these there was a tiny cubicle full of the exquisite and heavy fragrance of flowers, where Pollynni Kalavarides startled the observant purchaser with the sudden revelation of an original and seductive beauty.

But, if the truth be told, observant purchasers were not frequent in Pollynni's establishment. Those who bought flowers were generally the servants of designing persons, the wives of money-making men, or the abstracted lovers of girls. None of these could be depended on to perceive how Pollynni, Madame Kalavarides, differed very much from the average comeliness of Levantine women. Even her

husband, Eleutherios Kalavarides, an extremely dark young man with the convulsive movements of a figure in an early cinematograph, was unaware of any particular quality in her. Supposing he had, it may be doubted whether he would have been induced to support her. He hadn't time. When Pollynni thought of him, her curved, delicately pencilled black brows came forward in a frown, and in her large, brilliant, and tawny eyes smouldered a sinister glance of dislike. And the fact that she was frequently thinking of him and his behaviour developed this glance into a scowl and concealed her beauty as the grime of a street conceals the loveliness of an antique statue.

Mr. Kalavarides was one of those young men of whom the truth is never completely uttered, even in the offices of police captains. He was, in his own euphemistic phrase, "a guide to places of interest." Since the Greekish occupation he had been very busy, and several consuls had taken the trouble to write letters of complaint to the military governor about his activities. It must be confessed there was a prejudice against him, due in part to a misunderstanding of his ethical code and to his method of moving about. As already stated, this latter was a sort of syncopated series of interrupted gyrations. At times, as when he, like all the world, came through the Passage Kraemer, he seemed to float and flicker, as though he were a reed shaken by the wind, or an elementary organism moving spasmodically among the higher forms of life in an atmospheric aquarium. So he would come to rest for an appalling instant by the bank of ferns and palms in front of Pollynni's window; and she, looking up sombrely from the making of a wreath for the wife of Colonel Guanaris, who was to be buried next day, would see his toothy smile vibrating beyond the glass, his pose almost evoking a conviction that he was gathering himself up to spring bodily through the window. But even

as the frown contracted her brows, and she raised the long gleaming scissors from the table, he would be gone, in the wake of the two or three young sub-lieutenants from Volo who had engaged him as a guide.

And on one of these occasions—the wreath being for the daughter of Major Kragos, who had been ordered to rejoin his unit at once in the interior—an observant purchaser caught sight, not only of Pollynni's beauty beneath the sullen demeanour, but of Mr. Kalavarides' disturbing physiognomy as he wavered, like some oleaginous figurine on an invisible cord, by the window. And the observant purchaser, his fist full of jasmine and maiden-hair fern, turning to the girl behind the counter, uttered a wholesome expletive.

"Merciful heaven!" he added, gazing at her spellbound. "What was that?"

"Eh?" said Pollynni Kalavarides.

He repeated his question in Greek, and the girl's expression became sullen and haughty.

"That," she replied in a low and menacing tone, "is my husband," and she glanced up at the tall man with the reddish brown hair and the combative look in his eyes and the short curved nose that had led the way into many dark and abominable corners of Anatolia.

"Is he?" the man almost squealed, and looking at her as he felt in his pocket for the fifty piastres she demanded he almost added, "And what is a pagan madonna like you doing with such a piece of tripe for a husband?"

But he did not say it. Jimmy Russell, whose talents were divided between the Near East Relief and his original business of photography, was accustomed to thinking such things without uttering them. Besides, he was at this moment gazing absently at the girl while he handed over the money for the flowers.

"Would you allow me to take your photograph?" he asked politely. She paused and shot a full dark flash of interrogation from beneath her bent brows. And then the mask of commonness vanished from her face, the perfect broad oval became brilliantly illumined with a smile. Without any knowledge of her whatever, Jimmy Russell had touched her heart. It was a passion with her to be photographed, a passion curbed only by the prices Theotokis was now charging for his sittings. The smile died away and she shrugged her shoulders.

"I have no money," she remarked regretfully.

"Well, I will pay—well, what shall I pay for half a dozen poses?" he asked. She regarded him almost in awe.

"But—you would let me have one?"

"Oh, surely. One of each, if you like. And I'll give you a couple of pounds Turkish for the lot. Will that do?"

Jimmy Russell was blissfully unaware of the tumult he had evoked in the emotions of the girl who stood facing him over the wet counter littered with wet cuttings and scraps of wire and twine. He was not accustomed to considering the feelings of his subjects. He was a professional snapper-up of bizarre scenes, majestic scenery, and out-of-the-way costumes. He had taken his camera to the summits of snow-capped mountains and up equatorial rivers. He had set off his flares in dreadful hovels and, at midnight, in Indian temples and Mohammedan mosques. On the back of each print was the legend *Copyright by James Russell* and the great syndicates were glad to buy them at good prices. But Jimmy gave no particular heed to the thoughts of the quaint or fantastic beings he selected for his pictures.

"Now?" exclaimed the girl with an expression of astonishing vigour and determination.

"By golly, she's beautiful!" thought Jimmy. He was not at all in love with her. He was at the moment very much

attracted by a girl he had met in Boudga, the European suburb of Smyrna, and it was for her he had bought the flowers. Very much attracted. Agatha Stafford's father was attached to the Commission on Repatriation, which was trying to sort out the various nationalities who couldn't get on with the Greeks and wanted to be sent somewhere else. Agatha was a clever and attractive creature. Jimmy was only one of several, but he stood an excellent chance. Major Stafford had no desire for his daughter to marry a soldier. But while Agatha was clever and attractive she was nothing, artistically speaking, compared with Pollynni Kalavarides. There was all the difference between them that one finds between a rushlight candle and a high-powered electric beam. The former was comfortable and delightful; the latter, when it was turned full on you, dumbfounded and blinded you. "She's beautiful!" repeated Jimmy to himself, but he let it go at that. Agatha Stafford was in no danger of losing an admirer. Jimmy Russell was thinking of his business.

"Well, not at this moment," he replied agreeably and was going on to explain how he wanted her to pose, when she leaned forward, and in a low, vibrating voice murmured:

"You like me?"

Jimmy Russell was startled, and looked it. He was a very cool and resourceful young man, very much at home in this world of mixed races and morals and languages, but for a moment he wondered whether his command of the vernacular had been faulty. No, he decided he'd heard all right. As if to convince him she asked him again in a way he couldn't mistake.

"Do I please you?" she muttered, looking at him with a kind of languorous yet preoccupied ferocity, as though her mind was fixed upon some horrific abstraction.

And an extraordinary notion shot through Jimmy Russell's alert and predaceous mind.

"Yes," he said, nodding his head. "Thou art a lovely thing, and I am sad because I am betrothed to another."

Pollynni, somewhat to his discomfiture, did not change her expression at all. Jimmy Russell had overlooked the fact, and he could not be blamed, that Pollynni Kalavarides was equally set upon her own personal destiny. Here again his intuition failed him. He could not know that to be photographed was an enlargement, a duplication of her savage and starved personality.

"One copy, perhaps two, of each picture?" she demanded, ignoring his regretted betrothal.

"Oh, surely. More if you like. But you must come with me and let me pose you as I wish."

"Where would that be?" she asked, examining him shrewdly.

"In the country and at Boudga. That's where I'm staying now—Boudga."

"You are a rich American?" said Mrs. Kalavarides in a neutral tone, as though it were a matter of course and of no moment to her.

"Oh, sure!" he replied in English and laughed. But he informed her that he was not rich at all but earned his living by taking photographs. To her delight he suddenly produced from his pocket a small but extraordinarily complicated and expensive camera. And he stepped back, before she had recovered or lost the charming pose unconsciously aroused by his action—the head thrown back, the clenched hands raised, the faultless teeth just showing, the great blazing eyes wide open between lashes touched with collyrium. And she was naïvely alarmed when he ordered her harshly, almost brutally, to move not an inch while he set a tiny wooden box on a shelf above his head

and lit a piece of thread sticking out of it. And when the flash came, with a slight "poof!" and a cloud of acrid blue vapour, she uttered a low shriek, and smiled with a ravishing animal-like candour, like a panther purring. She conveyed an impression that the very ordeal was a source of profound happiness to her, was a delight almost physical in its sensuous ramifications, and as she shuddered slightly the action resembled the ripple that runs over the sleek forms of the larger felines when fed and fondled.

Agatha Stafford would have raised her fine eyebrows had she seen Jimmy Russell sitting sideways on the counter, where a sheet of clean white paper had been carefully spread for him, while he accentuated his remarks by waving a bunch of jasmine. He was becoming interested in Mrs. Kalavarides because she had begun to tell him of her unhappy life. He was surprised out of his amused tolerance of the Levantine character when she told him how she was born in what now we call Serbia at a place in the mountains whose guttural and to him unpronounceable name meant "the town by the holly trees." He judged, and judged rightly, that what she said of her youth was a fabrication. There are some women, and Pollynni Kalavarides was one of them, who speak of themselves in childhood as of angels, virtuous and of quite impossible beauty.

"You should see me when I was twelve!" she muttered. "I was beautiful then."

"Doubtless. But tell me how you married your husband, that queer fish I saw looking in the window."

"I could not help myself," she replied coldly.

"But he's a Greek!" said Russell, swinging his leg. "By your name, anyhow. Yet you say you were born Nelidoff. I thought you Slavs hated Greeks."

"Yes, we do. But he saved my life in the fire."

"What fire? Saloniki? Ah, I remember that. I was in Rome when that happened. Tell me."

She told him. She worked as she talked on the wreath for the daughter of Major Kragos, and sometimes she had to attend to frowsty glowering servants who came with orders for flowers. Once a young Greek officer, in a uniform of olive-green corduroy, and drawing his gloved fingers lightly along a sleek black moustache, came in for a bouquet to be sent to —— He glanced sideways at the impassive features of Jimmy Russell, who had already noted the direction written on the card.

She told him. He saw it all, the fire that came down roaring from the north, the unbelief of those who lived so far from the Turkish quarter, the bazaars going up in a fiery gale that blew through the long booth-cluttered tunnels until the glass roofs collapsed. He saw the mobs driving crazily along the Via Egnatia towards Trajan's Arch, the Arch that had seen so many mobs like that, and the gasping despair of the folk where she lived, in that city within a city—the rabbit warrens of the Cité Saul.

She told him. He remembered, afterwards, how he had sat spellbound, gazing into that superbly modelled face with the great blazing, tragic eyes, the stern, beautiful lips enunciating the sonorous hellenisms. And her gestures were astonishingly eloquent and illustrative not only of the dreadful scenes but of the horror of mind that came upon them as they found the red enemy at their gates and poured out into the streets that led down to the sea. But she and another girl had turned into an alley ringed with fire and ran to and fro screaming and hammering on doors with their naked hands. One of those doors suddenly opened upon them, and two young men dragged them in.

There was another way out of that house, and it was open. Eleutherios Kalavarides was one of the young men,

and the four of them fled out upon the quays. Yet their troubles were far from over, because there were no boats. The place was packed with a yelling swarm of gabardined Jews, their worldly goods piled beside them while they held out their hands in passionate appeal to the boatmen who stood off, haggling for higher and yet higher pay. These boatmen were Greeks, and they were laughing and calling to each other, lighting cigarettes and enjoying themselves, like fiends in the flames of hell.

"It was their turn that night," she said sullenly. "They stripped the Jews to their last drachma. But we got a boat for nothing when my husband called to them. Aie!" she exclaimed with a dramatic dilation of her brilliant eyes, "water in front and the fire roaring behind. How they yelled and yelled!"

"Humph!" muttered Jimmy Russell. He had imagination enough to see it as she described it, and he enjoyed the somewhat satirical situation of the unhappy Hebrews, with the dark laughing Greeks keeping their boats just out of reach. But he did not allow it to interfere with his appreciation of what he had found. Pollynni Kalavarides was a find. It was a crime that a girl like that should fritter her life away making wreaths and selling flowers in Anatolia instead of using the gifts that had been showered upon her. Yet he hesitated. His business instinct was halted by his knowledge of conditions and his reluctance to become involved in the fortunes of a stray woman. He knew the dangers of taking these Levantines too literally in their tales. Yet she screened, she screened. He could tell that even now. He wanted to develop what he had taken and see for himself. And he switched her gently back to the subject in which he had most interest.

"Ah, yes! I have many photographs in my house. You come?" For the first time her manner bore some slight tinge

of seduction. She lifted her head and flung him an oblique, provocative glance. And it made Jimmy Russell pause and think of Agatha Stafford, and Agatha Stafford's father, and all that formidable social fabric in which those two exemplary and charming persons were embedded. It would not do to become embroiled in any rows just now. There were peculiar rumours abroad in the town. There was talk in the Greek papers of a great advance upon Angora, but he discounted it, in spite of the cancelled leave of so many high officers. A Turk had been found—with his head cut off—floating in the harbour. The air was tense at times. Nobody seemed to know what was impending. Jimmy Russell decided to go and see the photographs, not because he desired an intrigue with the girl, but because he wished to keep her confidence. It would be a long shot, but if she did by any chance have a clear record and old Stafford could get her a passport, Jimmy Russell would arrange with his business partner in New York to sign her up as soon as she landed.

"I'll come, but you will understand that I am betrothed," he explained to her. He wasn't, but he felt justified in taking Miss Stafford for granted for once. "And it would not do for me to go to any place—you understand."

Pollynni Kalavarides scowled heavily at the tall blond young man who stood before her.

"What do you think?" she demanded angrily. "You think I am one of those women you meet at Luna Park or in Costi's at five o'clock. Let me tell you this—I want no man at all. After *him*, I am finished."

"Good!" said Jimmy heartily. "Because I can make your fortune if you can get a passport."

"What?" she said, perplexed at such a novel turn of the conversation. "What is that you tell me? A passport for me? For what place?"

"Well, we'll see later what we can do. I must see your photos. And let me have the address of the photographer, Mr. Theotokis."

She regarded him with a troubled glance as she rummaged among some grubby cards in a drawer.

"Here it is," she said. "It is by the hot baths in the Rue Frank, on the right as you go towards the Aidin Gate."

"And what time do you go to your house?" he asked, noting the address of the photographer.

"At seven. Tell me of the passport," she persisted pleadingly, and Jimmy wondered if there was a single inhabitant of Asia Minor or Eastern Europe who didn't want to get away from those regions.

"How can I tell?" he replied cautiously. "Maybe if you sign a paper to work for my firm we can get a passport. But—it will be difficult. I will come at seven."

"And bring word of the passport," she called after him as he went out into the Passage Kraemer.

Jimmy Russell, turning towards the Rue Parallel behind the arcade, wrinkled his nose and bit his upper lip as he tried to get his bearings in this new adventure. He hailed a carriage and told the driver to take him down the Rue Frank, to the house of Demetrios Theotokis, Studio Rhodope, and resigned himself to destiny. He had a piece of luck, soon after they passed the old Austrian Consulate. A tall old Turk, his sparse gray beard spotted with blood, his sinewy arms bound behind him, but his head high and undaunted, was fagging up the road amid a dozen Greek soldiers and followed by two mounted officers. Jimmy's camera clicked, and as he set it for another shot he recalled the expression of grim satisfaction on that old *franc-tireur's* face. He seemed happier than the little fellows, with their heavy rifles, who were guarding him.

And then they arrived at the Studio Rhodope. There was

a dingy case hanging on the doorway showing fly-specked photographs of extremely hellenic persons in wedding groups and still more hellenic figures in naval uniforms with medals dangling instead of ribands, and the general impression of a stranger would have been that Demetrios Theotokis was the usual photographic faker.

Jimmy Russell climbed the dirty staircase without nursing much hope of finding anything useful to himself. He knocked at a dirty door that swung open as he touched it, and met Mr. Theotokis in person.

He was a young man with a long serious face bearing a three-days' growth of black bristle. His hands were stained with chemicals, and saucers full of cigarette stubs were to be seen all over the room. He was smoking a cigarette as Mr. Russell entered, but laid it down at once. And when he heard what had brought his visitor to him his serious features became animated.

Jimmy Russell soon discovered that Demetrios Theotokis was a crank. Photography was his passion, and the classic tradition, and problems of light and shadow, of mass and line, were life and death to him. He drew out great portfolios of entirely unremunerative work—the temples of Ephesus, the tomb of Polycarp, the rocky shores of Lesbos, and astonishing compositions taken in hot sunlight on the quay. There was one of the Passage Kraemer, taken from the Rue Parallel and showing the huge round arch beyond which was the sunset-crimsoned sea, like a dark mirror. The arch was like a panel in a mediæval painting, and Mr. Theotokis had caught, with an artist's cunning, a horseman silhouetted against the gleam of the sky. He waved his long stained fingers over the prints. Mr. Russell nodded.

"Madame Kalavarides!" said Mr. Theotokis, and he smiled. "She loves to pose. I will show you."

Jimmy Russell was startled at what Mr. Theotokis showed him. Pollynni Kalavarides had been gratifying her own passion and that of the photographer at once. There were pictures of her in a dozen different poses, sometimes in outlandish taste, yet there was always an element of the dramatic in it, showing she had the inspiration, if not the equipment, to achieve a work of art. There was one where she had grasped the bosom of her dress and dragged it downward, while she registered a crude and murderous anger. Mr. Theotokis stood with his tall frame bent, studying the face of his visitor as he handed over the proofs of his skill.

"The girls of the quarter, they come here to be photographed lying nude on a tiger skin, and suchlike foolish poses, and they know nothing. Madame Kalavarides, she understands, but she has very little money. These I do for myself, sometimes. You perhaps are her great friend?"

"No, I am a photographer also," explained Jimmy Russell, handing over the money for the prints. "I may take one or two of her myself."

"Ah, yes!" said Mr. Theotokis, nodding slowly. "I would like to go to America. Here one can do nothing. I will send these to the hotel."

"Another of 'em!" muttered Jimmy as he went downstairs a few minutes later. But he reflected that here was a man they could do with over there. He was an artist, labouring amidst extraordinary difficulties, only vaguely aware of what he could do with encouragement and capital.

As he strolled once more through the Passage Kraemer, Jimmy Russell took stock of his impressions and decided that he would go out to Boudga this evening and sound old Stafford. Because if a local Greek like Theotokis could see what the girl was, some one else might happen along. The various commissions and services that cluttered up Smyrna

comprised many men who were keeping a weather eye open for any business chances that might be lying around.

He did not stop at the flower shop. He went up the wide staircase to the main hall of the hotel, a vast chamber upholstered in red velvet with gilded pilasters and extravagant mirrors, a vestige of the gorgeous, comfortable days before the war. He would like to have taken Mrs. Kalavarides out to dinner at Costi's, but her dark allusion to that place, quite unjustified, he was aware, and the sinister shadow of Mr. Kalavarides, evoked a cool caution in the young man's mind. He decided, while eating his dinner, that he would stipulate for the absence of Mr. Kalavarides.

"He sometimes returns at midnight," the girl told him as she locked the shop door. "He goes out with the Greek officers and shows them what they want to see. Often he does not return. He goes away into the country for days."

"I understand," said Jimmy Russell. "I am very sorry for thee, my dear."

She gave him a brilliant glance and led the way out towards the Rue Parallel. The Passage was now at the most spectacular and picturesque hour of the day. The feet of the crowds moving each way made a multitudinous murmur on the smooth flags, the lights of the confectioner's and the café shone out with cheerful garishness, and the calls of the newsboys and shoe-shine boys mingled with the hoarse shouts of cigarette vendors with their loaded trays. The brightness of that reverberating tunnel made the street outside dim and shadowy.

"It is not far," she said earnestly; "only a little way and then to the right."

So they went along, and presently, as she had said, they turned up a street connecting with the Rue Frank, and

Pollynni entered a dark doorway. Jimmy Russell, following her up an uncarpeted staircase, first one flight and then another, was thinking that, whatever his motives might be, even a charitable friend, seeing him on this errand, would draw unfortunate conclusions. It was characteristic of him to get the whole affair as a dramatic picture. He, Jimmy Russell, of the Near East Relief, snooping up the stairs of the Lord only knew what dubious tenement and caught by the woman he admired more than anyone else in the world.

"It would make a good shot," he muttered professionally, and halted on a landing while Mrs. Kalavarides tried her key in the lock.

It would not turn, and her concerned abstracted gaze was bearing round toward her companion when the door swung inward and she stumbled against a Greek lieutenant with a revolver, which he immediately pressed against her throat.

"Now!" he shouted over his shoulder, and to Jimmy Russell the scene dissolved into an extraordinary chaos of shouts, grunts, olive-green uniforms, and discontented eyes gleaming above dark romantic moustaches and gritted teeth. He experienced a kind of vague disgust because he could not collect his thoughts to discover what was going on. He was very hot and dusty, and it was borne in upon him that he was lying on a chair that was swaying, and the owners of the eyes and moustaches were lashing him to that chair, while Pollynni Kalavarides, regarding the lieutenant with unfathomable contempt, was speaking very rapidly in Greek. And Jimmy Russell, sprawled and breathless as he was, noted the expression of triumphant complacency on the officer's face change to doubt and exasperated petulance.

Jimmy Russell began to understand. All of them, even

the soldiers holding him, began to understand, and left the lashings unfinished. Pollynni was magnificent as she flung out a hand toward him.

"Does he look like Eleutherios Kalavarides?" she screamed at the lieutenant. "Fine work for you! If you want my husband, why do you come here? Seek him among your boy officers in the houses of fair reception. Seek him in the cafés of Kordelio. Look at this man. He is an American, and you kick him in the face and bind him in a chair. Fools! What do you want to do? Make trouble, trouble. All you ever make, as I know."

"Pst!" said the lieutenant, recovering from a daze in the shock of her cold fury. "Who is this? You bring him here to fool us?"

"I know nothing about you. This is my house. I pay the rent. Could the Osmanli do more than you here, opening doors of locked houses?"

"You hear?" said the lieutenant to his men. "She prefers the Osmanli."

Jimmy Russell broke into the wrangle.

"Lieutenant, you have made a serious mistake. It is as Madame Kalavarides tells you. I am an American, of the Relief. Tell your men to take off these ropes."

"Then you are—eh? Yes, unbind him," said the lieutenant. "You are a friend—eh?—of Madame."

"I am not the man you seek—that should be sufficient for an officer familiar with the world," retorted Jimmy Russell, standing up and brushing himself briskly. "Perhaps you may obtain assistance if you explain what you are doing. What is the trouble?"

"Eleutherios Kalavarides is a traitor," said the lieutenant harshly. He turned as a sound of spurs, mingled with a heavy tread, approached them. A tall broad man, with several medals on his breast and a long plated sword

clanking at his heels, stood before them. The lieutenant saluted. The new arrival looked round, breathing heavily from his climb, and then at the lieutenant, who shrugged his epaulettes.

"The bird was flown, Major," he muttered. "This man is an American."

"The bird is not yet arrived," replied the other. "He will come. You will set a guard at the windows of the house opposite. I have decided."

"Very good, Major. I was just telling this gentleman, who is of the Relief, that the man we seek is a traitor." He turned to Jimmy again and accepted a cigarette. The major did the same. "He has extracted information from our officers who employed him and has been in communication with the Ottoman forces. The situation is serious."

The major nodded, eyeing Pollynni with frank appraisal. A delicate situation. He decided that things were too complicated just now to bother about a fresh affair. Jimmy noted the glance.

"This lady and I," said he, "had an appointment to see some photographs. I may be able to get her a passport from the Repatriation Bureau. Since her husband is what you say, she could not be detained from returning to her own country."

"But her husband has somehow secured a passport for both of them to America, and a passage on a relief ship," said the major sententiously. "His plan was to depart by the French ship *Mercedes* to-morrow. We have arranged to prevent it."

"He did that!" exclaimed Pollynni. "But we are apart. He never gives me a single drachma for the house." The major shrugged.

"Oh, as for that, he probably intended to take someone else, eh?" He opened his eyes very wide.

Pollynni gasped and put her hand to her chin. Then she too shrugged and laughed.

"Of course! I should have thought of that."

"You will accept my apology, I hope," said the lieutenant, and Jimmy made a gesture of dismissing the affair from his mind.

"I think," he said, "Madame Kalavarides had better come with me if you are going to set a watch on this place. I can arrange for her accommodation at the Bureau of Relief."

The major nodded, eyeing the girl again.

"Then," said Jimmy, "we can wait downstairs while Madame gets ready." The major saw the point and motioned to the lieutenant to take his men down in advance. Jimmy asked a question as they closed the door.

"The situation is not only serious, it is critical," observed the major in reply. "We are in action about a hundred kilometres to the north. Artillery is going through from the eastern front."

Jimmy commented that he hoped no more refugees would enter the city for a while. They had been coming in rather more of late, he said.

"They are ignorant—they run at the sight of a Turkish hat on a pole," said the major.

It was only a few days later that Jimmy saw them all running, majors and colonels and peasants, running like madmen, filling boats so full they turned over, and covered the harbour with frenzied drowning men and women and children.

When Pollynni Kalavarides appeared, he hailed a passing carriage, and they got in.

"Now, hear me," he said in a low tone. "I think you will do well to stay away from this place for a while. There is trouble about. These officers are in a sweat, and I fancy they are not doing so well at the front. I will give you a pass to

the Bureau, and to-morrow I will get you a passport from the Repatriation Bureau. You may have to stay at Patras awhile—I don't know."

She grasped his arm.

"You will not leave me now?" she whispered. "For me there is nothing here save sorrow. I kneel to you!"

"No need," he said briefly. "I think we can manage it."

"I kneel to you!" she repeated passionately, and he could feel the trembling of her limbs.

It was sunset the next day that Jimmy Russell came along the Rue Parallel and saw the end of Eleutherios Kalavarides, guide to places of interest. He found the lieutenant in a doorway, but the street was empty. He had heard rifle shots, and now there was another, and a piece of stucco fell and exploded in white dust on the sidewalk.

"He has been there all day," said the lieutenant. "Barricaded. He knows we have him. We are watching the window."

"Why do you not go up, then?"

"He is armed, and he has a girl with him who seems out of her mind. She nearly killed one of my men in the house opposite. Now they do not know where we are. They will come to the window again soon. We shall have them."

"Have a cigarette," said Jimmy, and crowded courteously into the doorway. "A girl, eh?"

"Ah, one of these Russian women, with a face like a Mongol and a scarlet cap. A Bolo. They seek strange sensations. She, for instance, is loved by a renegade."

"Is that a strange sensation?" asked Jimmy wonderingly. "I mean, a pleasurable sensation?"

"She probably thinks so. Look out!"

A sharp report barked out just above them. There was a scream, and Jimmy was constrained to peep out. He saw a scarlet cap emerge from the window across the street

and draw back. And then Mr. Kalavarides appeared there, as though he were engaged in some strange convulsive dance. His head came forward and then strained back. Suddenly, as a rifle cracked down the street, he became still, his neck stretched taut, his mouth open in a wide gape as though he were shouting. And then he fell like a limp bundle across the sill, his arms hanging over, and between his shoulders lay a head, the head of the girl in the scarlet cap.

Far away from the City of the Giaours, beyond the Rocky Mountains, where eternal summer reigns, and the boulevards stretch out among the hills like ribands of black satin, there is a villa whose many windows look from beneath the red-tiled Spanish roof towards the Pacific, gleaming like a sapphire beyond the eucalyptus groves. A car, a jewel of silver and jade, moves off from the door and soars away towards a magical city on the hillside, above a dark forest of oil derricks. It bears a woman who once called herself Pollynni Kalavarides, who was born amid the Serbian mountains at the Town of the Holly, who has found her destiny and the work of her life, and who still startles an unsuspecting world with the sudden revelation of an original and seductive beauty.

THE GARDEN OF THE BEY

FEW people would have credited Captain Linder with a sense of beauty or with any talent for refinement. Yet he had it, and he derived most of his happiness from the possession of it, and from his conviction that the men he met lacked the power to appreciate his superiority to them in this respect. You might almost have credited him with making a show of his secret good fortune. He really did brag of it at times.

He had been letting his passenger, Jimmy Russell, into the secret for the entire voyage from Bizerta to Alexandria, a matter of five days in the little old *Lauderdale*. Jimmy Russell, a photographer of strange men, women, children, animals, scenes and episodes, a sort of pilgrim beset by a passionate curiosity concerning the visible world, was a surprised but receptive listener to these confidences. Jimmy had just made a trying and rather dangerous journey from Biskra in the desert, down to Laghouat and Ghardaïa, thence along the shores of the Tunisian Lakes to Gabes and up the coast to Bizerta. He had brought back some extremely fine negatives, and it pleased him to discover how ardently Captain Linder studied them and showed a vigorous appreciation of their qualities. His first interest was for the dramatic features that Jimmy managed to incorporate in his pictures of desert life. He pointed them out and expressed approbation. He had a small camera himself, and he took his passenger down to his cabin and showed him several albums full of snapshots of many places. They were good, and Jimmy said so.

"Do you develop these yourself?" he asked.

"I certainly do," said Captain Linder. "I have a red

scuttle light for my bathroom. Now I will show you some more." And he took out another album, bound in red morocco leather, with a lock.

This was a great surprise for Jimmy Russell. There was nothing about the captain to indicate such a secret in his life. He was a youngish man of thirty, rather sharp and peremptory in manner, a shade egotistical in statement, with a slight tendency toward assuming that he had the right-of-way in a conversation or argument, and evidently above the position he held as commander of a small tramp steamer. The crew seemed to regard him with respect, if not affection. He had in his cabin the usual pictures of a suburban house of surpassing ugliness, family groups, and groups of ships' officers, mere wraiths dressed in uniforms, with a lifebuoy in front of them. There were several photographs of children and one of an Airedale. But nothing to show that Captain Linder had a secret. Jimmy Russell did not comprehend at first that he was being taken into a confidence. He did not realize that it was part of the captain's ethical code to approach such a revelation obliquely. And he had the English habit of understatement.

"Who is this?" asked Jimmy Russell, pointing to the picture of a girl.

"Somebody I know," said the captain, looking as if to make sure, and then going on with his preparations for a drink. "Oh, just somebody I know."

"But they're all of the same girl," said Jimmy, turning over the leaves.

"Yes, she's a friend of mine. I know her quite well," said Captain Linder, and there was a note of pride in his voice as he spoke.

"I guess you do. You've taken enough photographs of her," muttered Jimmy. He was impressed. The girl was

dark, with strong features and a vigorously beautiful figure, and the pictures revealed her in every pose she might take throughout the day. She was at a window looking out among flowers. She was going to market with a basket. She was on her way, apparently, to church. She was in an apron, with a saucepan in her hand. She was sitting in a chair, darning a stocking. She was at a table, writing a letter. She was standing by a mail box in the street, posting a letter. She was holding a camera, taking a snapshot. And in all these pictures she looked out upon the world with a dark, patient, provocative smile, as though she were going through the ordeal to gratify the half-understood desires of the person who was accumulating these records.

Jimmy looked up at the captain, who was holding a glass toward him. He took it and made a gesture of salutation.

"Well, what's the answer, Captain?" he asked. "Am I wrong in assuming you take a particular interest in this young lady?"

Captain Linder drank and sat down, examining the beverage closely. He seemed to be pondering the question, as though it shed a new and unexpected light upon the problem. Then he stared hard at his passenger and nodded.

"You can put it that way," he admitted finally. "Yes, I should say I took a certain amount of interest in her."

"Foreign extraction, isn't she?" asked Jimmy. He glanced at the last picture in the album. The girl was waving a handkerchief in farewell. She was in a short calico dress printed with an austere rectangular border design that called to mind, somehow, a Greek frieze. Captain Linder nodded. He stood up and looked out of the polished brass porthole which opened over his red-plush settee. Gazing up at him, Jimmy was struck by the pathetic childishness of the man's face, seen from below.

He suspected it was an instinctive knowledge of this that made Captain Linder always appear to crouch and lower when he spoke. And this expression of elvish youth was now intensified by the reflection of the sea across his pale blue eyes. Outside, the shining blue water was hurrying past in a series of pulsing and glittering points of light. Behind them Cape Bon was fading into the horizon. Ahead lay the Malta Channel and an unchanged course for Alexandria. Suddenly Captain Linder turned and beckoned. Jimmy rose and looked out; the *Lauderdale* was sailing abeam of a brownish-green lump away to the southward, one of the many islands scattered between Sicily and Africa.

"Do you know what that is?" asked the captain.

"Sure, it's an island," replied Jimmy, rather at a loss.

"Yes, that's Pantelleria."

"Is it? What about it?"

"You don't know," said the captain, draining his glass, "that Pantelleria is an Italian convict settlement."

"Well, what of it? You aren't calling there, are you?"

"No, but I go past it every voyage," remarked the captain. "You know, they say it's a hell."

"Well, there'd be no particular object in making it a heaven," suggested Jimmy. His eye fell on the photograph album lying open on the settee, where he had left it, and as he was about to pick it up again he became suddenly aware of the fact that there was some connection in the captain's mind between Pantelleria and the girl in those pictures, who was, he had admitted, of foreign extraction. Yet Jimmy, ruthless as he was as a rule in digging down and unearthing useful information, hesitated now. He decided to wait. He handed the album back with the remark that it was a very interesting series of pictures. A very pretty girl. Lucky man.

"What do you mean, lucky?" demanded the captain suddenly. "You think I'm lucky?"

"To be her friend," explained Jimmy, smiling in spite of himself. Captain Linder's state of mind was interesting.

"Oh, her friend. Well, perhaps I'm a little more than that, Mr. Russell."

This was the way of it, during the five-days' run to Alexandria. Jimmy Russell was no fool. He soon discovered that the captain was suffering from a bad case of suppressed loquacity. This was vividly revealed when he said one day that if the owners knew he had a girl friend in Alexandria they'd cashier him. And at that they wouldn't be long getting the information if the mates or engineers got wind of it. News like that travelled faster than—how fast do they say light travels?—hundred and eighty thousand miles a second?—well, just about that speed!

Jimmy let him talk. He asked very few questions, and he was rewarded by a tale of love so unexpectedly tragic in some of its aspects that he often walked up and down the little bridge deck of the *Lauderdale* for hours, thinking about it. While he was doing this Captain Linder would lean on the rail, looking across the sea, which had no islands in it at all now, but seemed as wide and as empty as the Atlantic itself. He would lean on the rail, and the pose of the man seemed to convey the impression that he was waiting for his words to sink into his passenger's mind, or perhaps heart, because he was aware of the character of his experiences, and the wonderful beauty of the passion encompassing his life.

Jimmy let him talk. Sometimes, as they lay in deck chairs under the bridge, listening to the regular footfall of the officer of the watch, and the occasional clash of gears from the steering engine, the captain would remain deep in thought for a long while. But sooner or later he would

return to his one topic, with amusingly innocent pretense that he was taking up a fresh subject, and he would tell his listener a little more about Marie Mansour, the girl of the pictures, and the tiny establishment on the top floor, with a garden on the roof, of the tall building behind Stein's Oriental Stores in the Rue des Sœurs in Alexandria. And more interesting even than this, to Jimmy, was the gradual unfolding of the captain's life and how he came to be the proprietor of the establishment. He was very watchful lest his hearer should "jump to conclusions."

"You mustn't jump to conclusions," he said often, and by this, it appeared, he meant "the usual business you read about in the Sunday papers."

Jimmy was surprised to find that this vague description made it perfectly clear what the captain meant. He had no particular gift of language, and this affair ought by rights to have happened to some one who had that gift. This was how the captain impressed Jimmy, that he was entirely and gloriously aware, inside of him, of his distinction in finding such a girl, but he was powerless to make it known, otherwise than by gruff, laconic, often by crude, expressions. More than that, Jimmy suspected that Captain Linder was only conforming to what he imagined was due to his position as a seaman and a Britisher by being inarticulate yet aggressively proud. To an American such a mentality was very nearly inexplicable; but Jimmy Russell, who came from New Hampshire by way of New York City, felt he got a glimpse of it as he gradually collected notes on the sort of home life awaiting the captain should he ever leave the sea.

There was no father, he having died while the captain was an apprentice in sail, and the family consisted of his mother, and four sisters all older than himself, and they kept a pastry shop and tea room on a steep street in one

of those thousand-year-old cathedral towns of East Anglia. Captain Linder took a sort of gloomy pride in their position in the place, and in their prosperity, which had enabled them to move their home out to a suburban villa. They were in no sense dependent upon him, he said, but they were very devout and particular in their ways. They never said it in so many words, but there was no doubt they regarded going to sea as scarcely the correct profession for their brother, their father having been an alderman and justice of the peace.

Jimmy had a suspicion the captain sided with his family in this feeling, wistfully conscious that he had been a failure from their point of view, yet claiming his right to his own life—because to him their life in that old city of the East Anglian plain was beyond all endurance. There was in him somehow a craving for light, and colour, and violent passion, and he could discover nothing that would assuage it at home. It had grown and grown through the years of probation, and his scornful, cantankerous yeoman blood had held him back from the usual reefs and shoals of the imaginative sailor, until he had got command of this small steamer making the round of the Mediterranean ports.

It was a come-down from being mate of a White Star intermediate boat; but that in its way had been as uncongenial to him as the family life at home. It had been Liverpool and New York, New York and Liverpool, with frozen meat and general cargo, a ceaseless grind of hard work and vigilance on board sixteen thousand tons of anxiety. This here, Captain Linder said, had been like getting to heaven after it. It had given him what he had been unconsciously groping after, a chance to see the loveliness of the world, the beauty of old cities, and the romantic glamour of strange lands and peoples. Jimmy Russell saw

this in the albums he often looked at in the captain's room, with their pictures of out-of-the-way places like Sfax and Aguilas, of Ægean Islands and Italian towns. And it culminated one day in Alexandria, as the captain walked along past the Coptic Church towards the Boulevard Ramleh, and met Marie Mansour.

"She was walking past me, you understand," he said to Jimmy, who was staring in amazement at the man who had taken three days to reach the central fact of his story, "walking past me, and she was staring at me so hard I was embarrassed, wondering what she was driving at, when I saw of a sudden she wasn't looking at me at all. Bumped into me, she did. And realized what she'd done, you know—looked around in a strange way with her hands out to keep herself from falling. And there was me, as handy as an elephant, standing by. I caught hold of her just in time, when she fell over."

Captain Linder devoted some time to working round and round the dreadful mistake that Jimmy might be making, "jumping to conclusions" that the girl was not respectable. That was the very cause of her collapse, the very reason she didn't know what she was doing when she fell up against a seagoing slob like him.

Jimmy ventured a diplomatic question.

"Certainly," replied Captain Linder. "She had married one of these Italians. You know there's a large Italian colony in Egypt. But he was from Naples. Used to travel all over the place. One of these smooth chaps. She is a Syrian. Now don't go jumping to conclusions. Most Syrians, you may not know, are Christians, same as you and me, even if they're not Protestants. And her family had gone back to Beyrout and got killed in a riot with the Arabs. So there she was, alone with him in Alexandria. Him going and coming all the time, and living well. Gave her

plenty of money to keep house. He was supposed to be a traveller, selling machinery for a firm in Genoa. And then one day, after he arrives from a trip to Europe, there's a knock at the door, and when she opens it a crowd of police rush in. For him. They had caught him passing bad money. Bad fifty-lira notes were coming in somewhere, and they'd got him at last. Big engraving plant in Genoa.

"They took him away, after he'd shot one of them through the lung so he nearly died. And as he was already wanted for half a dozen crimes in Italy the banks had him extradited. And he got ten years in Pantelleria."

Jimmy offered a remark about the girl.

"That's right," assented the captain. "She had nothing to do with it. And she had no money at all. You understand now what I mean about not jumping to conclusions. Egypt's a funny place for a girl in her position. Alexandria's full of men watching for the girls who are in a fix just like that. Full. They will follow a girl along the street telling her what a fine time she can have if she'll only be reasonable. Chaps in fezzes. Beys, they call themselves. Lucky she fell where she did."

Jimmy conceded that it was lucky, and he began to appreciate how exquisite must have been the discomfort of a man with such a story to tell and with nobody he could trust to accept the confidence in the right way. Nobody who could keep his secret and refrain from "jumping to conclusions."

There had been a seat under the trees near that Coptic Church, and they had sat down until she was better. He had discovered then that she had that day reached the end of her tether. She had been hanging on in the hopes of being engaged in Stein's Oriental Stores—largest department store in the eastern Mediterranean—but the employment bureau had heard of what had happened in spite of her

going back to her maiden name, and that road was closed to her.

"What could I do?" demanded Captain Linder harshly. "Couldn't let her starve, hey? Well, that was how it started."

"Mind you," he went on, watchful lest conclusions should be jumped at in spite of all his care, "mind you, I went into the matter and found she had told me the truth. I loaned her enough to pay her rent and board till I got back. Even then, after she got this place she has now, we—we waited. See what I mean? When I was in Genoa I asked the agent about it. He laughed. He told me a man who went to Pantelleria for ten years was dead, you might say. We'd never be bothered about *him* again, he told me. All the same, we waited."

The captain harped on the waiting, not so much because he thought Jimmy doubted him but in order to explain the situation. He never alluded to the fact, but Jimmy was aware that under the banked fires of this waiting there had been burning a passion, each for the other, that eventually consumed all save the man's native resolution to keep it a thing apart from his professional and family life at home. This was his home now, yet over it hung the sorrowful cloud which only a stranger's death could destroy.

Jimmy had the most of it by the time the Pharos Lighthouse was picked up and the *Lauderdale* got a pilot to take her into the great harbour of Alexandria. The ancients, Captain Linder remarked gruffly to his passenger, when he had a moment to spare from his duties, called it by a name meaning, "the haven of happy returns," and a gleam of unwonted humour came into his pale blue eyes when Jimmy made some general remark about history repeating itself.

"Ah!" he said, and moved to the bridge rail again. Sometime later he was still smiling faintly.

Nevertheless, Jimmy Russell, having much experience of men in many climes, did not expect to be retained any longer as the repository of confidences. Men, like ships, change their character when they touch the land. So he was surprised later, when the formalities of arrival were over, to have Captain Linder, almost unrecognizable in a smart linen suit and straw hat, come to the door of his cabin, where he was strapping the last of his baggage.

"Thought you might like to come in my boat," said the captain. "It's a long way, if you've never been here before."

"Sure I'll come," said Jimmy.

The sun was setting behind the Pharos and the great palace of Ras-el-Tin as the Arab boat sailed across the western harbour and up to the Custom House quay. The water was a gleaming coppery plaque of light. The hulls of steamers lay like huge masses of shadow stranded on a shining floor. A warship was flashing a light on her cross-trees to the signal station on the Cafarelli Fortress. The other Arab boats coming in from distant vessels advanced with a steady, almost imperceptible movement, like huge sleeping birds under great wings. The domes and minarets of the city drew nearer.

Captain Linder made no comment upon this scene. Jimmy Russell knew the man well enough by now to understand how it took hold of him, how the whole glittering city was a setting for his secret. For Jimmy himself there was about it a feeling of coming home. After the desert and the tents of the Bedouins and Berbers, after their dirty little towns and the desolate watery wastes of Tunisia, this bright city was home to a white man. For a few days he would rest.

The captain advised him to leave his heavy baggage in the Custom House until the morning, and soon they were driving through the narrow streets of the native quarter toward the centre of the city.

"You'll be at the hotel a few days?" said the captain.

"About a week."

"Then we may see you."

"Why not come and have dinner with me? Both of you, I mean," suggested Jimmy.

"Well, it's like this. Marie, she's very shy. About meeting strangers, that is. I can never get her to go to the big places. She cooks at home. She has an Arab girl. Now suppose you come, eh? She's shy, but she'll get used to you if you don't fluster her. And bring your camera. You can take real pictures. I'm only a beginner. Mind, I wouldn't ask everybody to do this. But I've been thinking——"

"I understand," said Jimmy.

But when they reached the hotel in the Rue de la Porte de Rosette, Captain Linder put Jimmy's hand to one side, when he offered to say good-bye, and frowned.

"Come now," he said. "I'll wait while you get a room." Jimmy left him in the carriage in a pose suggesting profound thought, as though he were forming some new and difficult resolutions.

"I can see what it is," he said when they drove off again. "She's got to see people. I'm glad I thought of it. She's got to come out of her shell. I've been to blame. I've had the idea it was better. If any of the crew saw me with her, you understand? But with you, and other people, there'd be nothing in it. Just a party."

All the way along the great Rue Chérif Pasha and across the Place Mohammed Aly, Captain Linder expanded this idea. Jimmy couldn't help reflecting upon the captain's

assumption that the success of his plans for his own and the girl's happiness was of prime importance to everybody. The man's intense absorption in the affair made Jimmy wonder if she understood it. All the pent-up passion of a lifetime was now being held by what seemed to Jimmy, who was no cynic, but a mere active and experienced man of the world, dangerously frail barriers. He listened and looked out upon the dazzling colour of Alexandria and wondered what she was really like. They swept with a great clatter of hoofs and cracking of the whip into a crowded street and presently drew up at the curb.

"Now for a climb," said the captain. "No lifts here, you know."

When they had reached the uppermost floor but one the captain said he would go on first, "to prepare her mind," as he put it.

Jimmy watched his tall rangy figure vanish round the turn of the stairs, and then took a deep breath. So this was love. He felt most the pathos of it. What agonies of heart and mind, to achieve the mere elements of happiness! Perhaps it was that toil and the attending danger that made the adventure so tenderly sweet. Jimmy looked at his cigarette. He was no cynic, as has been said, but he knew enough of the world, and of photography, to be philosophic about this wondrous creature hidden away upstairs. Well—he looked along the passage as one of the doors opened and a woman in a chemise and petticoat looked out. Seeing him she withdrew and closed the door with phenomenal slowness, until Jimmy saw but one bright inquisitive eye at the crack of it. There was a smell of stale patchouli in the air. The door closed with a click.

He was beginning to wonder how long it took to prepare a girl's mind for so simple a problem as himself, when he heard a heavy footfall, and Captain Linder, his face

drawn, his mouth pinched in over his teeth, his hands clenched and his body crouched, appeared at the turn. He stood there staring at the man below him, frowning horribly, as though his life suddenly hung upon his remembering something in the irretrievable past. Jimmy went up toward him, at once.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

Captain Linder turned and led the way up. A door stood open; the bunch of keys swung gently from the lock. They went into a little room full of gimcrack French furniture. The flowers in the vases were dead. A heavy coating of dust lay on the table and piano. In the room beyond, a bed had the sheets thrown over the foot rail, revealing a yellow mattress with a white circle of flock showing in the middle. There was a faint squeaking, and Jimmy saw something moving there and realized with a shock that it was a nest of young mice. An enormous cockroach rushed over the floor and vanished. Jimmy had a sensation of a long period of time passing. He heard a strange sound. He made an effort, and he was at length able to identify the sound. It came from Captain Linder, who was making marks in the dust of the table with a letter he had picked up from the floor. He was repeating the word "Gone!" in a low tone, as though it were something new and curious, something with which he had had no previous acquaintance.

Jimmy Russell was never able to see himself as an adventurous man. He always avoided danger when possible. And one of the principles he had found most useful to him in his career was to regard women as the most subtle of dangers. He was kind, he was polite, he was sporting. There had been occasions when he had "played round," as he phrased it, when the chance had come his way, when the episode had been one of those exquisite, uncalculated,

timeless things, like a pebble dropped in an Alpine lake, unseen by the world, and fused in his memory with the general beauty of life. But as a practical camera man he figured that love affairs on a grand scale were perilous. He made excuses on the grounds that he was engaged. He had invented a romance for himself, as some animals assume protective colouring in danger. He had a photograph in a travelling wallet of an extremely attractive girl. He had carried this symbol of fidelity so long he half believed in it. He had found the negative in a dark-room he had once rented in London. Admiring the pose, it was a simple matter to take a print. She was a dark girl, wearing a dress that revealed the robust beauty of her person. Jimmy liked slender blonde girls, but he fancied that if he were ever "caught" it would be by one of the others, a brunette with the devil in her. There might be vanity in this vague instinctive view. Men often delude themselves with the notion that what they fear is desirable.

And his first impulse when he found himself alone in Captain Linder's confidence at that dreadful climax was to withdraw. After all he couldn't see what he, an alien stranger just arrived, would be able to do. The only counsel he could think of was to consult the police. But for some reason a Syrian girl who had disappeared would be of small interest to police composed of Arabs and Soudanese with French officers. The neighbours said they knew nothing save that more than a week ago the little Arab servant told them she could not get into Miss Mansour's apartment. Someone had seen Marie Mansour hanging clothes on the line on the roof, and the clothes were still there, blown under the parapet. That was all. She was swallowed up in a city of four hundred thousand people, of a dozen diverse races. To Jimmy it was a problem beyond his powers. He had said so. Captain Linder had frowned,

turned heavily upon him, and muttered, his shaking hand on his mouth.

"Oh—you! Of course. Let me think."

Jimmy had left him thinking, in that sad place, and had gone back to his hotel, angry with himself because he could do nothing to help a man in such agony.

And that evening after dinner he had met the laughing young man of the Rue Cléopâtre. He had been thinking, as he sat at a little green table in front of the Café Samsoun in the great Place Mohammed Aly, with an entirely fresh curiosity about that phantom fiancée of his own, and what he would do supposing she were a reality to him and he lost her. What would he do? He smoked several cigarettes over the problem. Even supposing she wasn't married to a convict on Pantelleria, supposing she had been of his own race, the difficulties were alarming. As for Captain Linder——

And then the laughing young man, who afterwards told Jimmy that he lived in the Rue Cléopâtre, "the only man in that street," came and sat down at the next table, smiled, held out an unlighted cigarette for the favour of a match, and remarked in a rich hoarse voice that it was a delightful evening.

Jimmy said it was, passed the matches, and when the waiter arrived with *granita* and coffee made a gesture of invitation to the young man, who rose a little from his seat, lifted his hat a little from his handsome curly head, and showed all his fine teeth in a smile of acceptance. He moved his chair to Jimmy's table and began a monologue of light chatter. He spoke English very well indeed, with an occasional mastery of satirical idiom and abstract allusions rather impressive in one so young. Indeed, the memory Jimmy Russell carried away with him when he left Alexandria was that this young man was a sort of incarnation

of the city—ageless, merciless, magically intelligent and devoid of feeling. He might have belonged to any period of her history, with his slave bangles on his wrist, his ring with a stone of lapis-lazuli, his handsome boyish yet Cæsarean face.

So he might have remained a vagrant memory had not Jimmy asked him where he learned his English.

"In the American Mission," replied the young man, and added that his mother was a Syrian from Jerusalem. He laughed gaily.

"I am, what you call, unfortunate!" he exclaimed. "All the same, I hope to succeed in life! I am in a bank. A very good position. My mother, with whom I live, in the Rue Cléopâtre, is very pleased. If you wish any bank business, I will be very glad." He took out his card and handed it to Jimmy, with a smile.

It was here that Jimmy's mind recurred to his friend Captain Linder. He saw from the card that Mr. Enrico Yakoub represented the Royal Etrurian Bank, Rue de l'Ancienne Bourse. He looked at it, and then at the young gentleman.

"Hm," he began thoughtfully. "Thank you. By the way, did you ever hear of a man named Arouani?"

The young man threw back his head and laughed heartily.

"Of course I have heard of Arouani," he replied. "What do you want to know about him?" he bubbled happily, as though Arouani were an irresistible joke.

"Perhaps it is not the same man," said Jimmy, not very certain of his ground.

"The police arrested him and the government sent him to Italy. He is doing time," giggled Mr. Yakoub. "For uttering forged bank notes."

"That's the man. Did you know he had a wife?"

This seemed very funny to the young man. He threw away his cigarette stub with a dashing gesture and applied himself to his *granita*.

"So have everybody a wife," he mused.

"Then you never saw her or—anything?"

Mr. Enrico Yakoub looked up, and for a moment there was a mature gravity in his beautiful brown eyes.

"Me? No. I—I am too young," he said, with a ringing metallic accent on the last word, and for a moment Jimmy had an uncanny sensation that it was a woman gazing at him.

"She was, like yourself, a Syrian," he remarked. Mr. Yakoub leaned forward.

"Ye-s?" he murmured, interested at last. "How you know all this? You—you have an interest in this lady?"

Jimmy Russell thought rapidly and decided that this was an excellent suggestion. He nodded. He explained along those lines.

"And I come back and find she is gone. Nobody in the house knows where she went."

Mr. Yakoub pushed his ice away and folded his arms on the table. He stared very hard at his companion. To Jimmy it was clear the young gentleman was trying to recall something. When the smile left his face he was like "a greedy young pagan god," as Jimmy phrased it afterwards. It was a strange blending of beauty and cupidity. Suddenly he blinked and showed his teeth in a broad grin.

"I tell you," he exclaimed. "You want to find this girl? You make it worth something to me, eh?"

"Sure. How much you want?"

"Five pound. I'll find anybody in this town for five pound! I *think* I know, but I'm not sure, where she is."

"What?" said Jimmy. He was upset by the calmness of the young man's announcement.

"Yes," insisted the laughing young man from the Rue Cléopâtre, the Street of the Women. "What you say? Five hundred piastres?"

"Two hundred," said Jimmy, and the young man, who would have taken the job for fifty, laughed and said:

"All right. We take a cab. You stop at the Savoy Hotel, eh?"

"How did you know that?" demanded Jimmy, signalling the waiter.

"I see you come out, and I follow you down the Rue Chérif Pasha," said Mr. Enrico Yakoub. "I think—he is new tourist. Perhaps to-morrow he visit my bank. I speak English, Arabic, Italian, French, Greek, all with *great* fluency." And he giggled as he hailed a passing carriage.

For Jimmy Russell that was a notable evening. His only regret afterward was that he had no camera. Mr. Enrico Yakoub took him into a great many sinks of iniquity and past a good many other places. They visited in particular a huge lazy Circassian girl whose blonde head was bound with a circle made of ten-dollar gold pieces. With this voluptuous milk-fed creature Mr. Yakoub conversed in a melodious tongue while every hawker between the Boulevard Ramleh and the sea tried to sell Jimmy a variety of articles ranging from peanuts to shoe laces, from cotton socks to Turkish delight.

"She says," said the young man, shoving a lemonade seller, with his clinking cups, out of the way. "She says Melwalli Bey is the one most likely to have done this thing."

"Allah destroy thee!" screamed the vendor in between his cries.

"Thy mother was a cow of no discretion!" he was informed with staggering suddenness by the smiling young gentleman, who spat Arabic like a camel driver.

"Well?" said Jimmy doubtfully. The racket about him, the lights, the press of strange people bothered him.

"Well, everybody in the Rue Cléopâtre knows that Melwalli Bey had trouble in his house before he went to hunt gazelles at Siwah. That is in the Libyan desert. Two weeks ago." Mr. Yakoub looked at Jimmy's serious face and laughed. "You don't understand, eh? Well, I will explain to you. Melwalli Bey, he is rich. Big house here at Mex. Big house in Cairo. Big house in the Oasis, for to hunt the gazelle. With eagles. Great sport. And Melwalli Bey, he have what you call big family? No, big establishment. Oh, he like the pretty girls! As we say, he have a beautiful garden. He make them rich. I know he have trouble in his house because Krysanthia Sigalas, in the Rue Cléopâtre, near my house, she tell my mother she get twenty thousand piastres for a ring Melwalli Bey give her. She's a Greek girl. She run away from his house in Mex. She was in the garden." He made a grimace.

"Wait a minute. Let me get this straight," said Jimmy. He spoke in French, for he suspected that the young man's English would distort his meaning. Mr. Yakoub nodded and replied with mellifluous fluency.

"Yes. That is how it is. Some of his men take her. No, by and by they let her go. Now we go to see a friend of mine."

They took another carriage and drove out into the light and noise of the Boulevard Ramleh. The laughing young man led Jimmy up a narrow side street until they reached a drug store with coloured globes on brackets in the window. An old gentleman wearing a fez came out of a room at the back. An Arab boy in a white robe was sweeping the shop. Mr. Yakoub spoke in Arabic to the old gentleman, who ushered them into the back room. There was nobody to be seen, only chairs and divans, and it was lighted

by a lamp with a yellow shade. The old gentleman followed them in and kept his eyes on Jimmy in a watchful manner.

"No?" said Mr. Yakoub, and when he found that his employer had no intention of experimenting with hashish he ordered coffee and plain cigarettes. When they were alone he told Jimmy that Melwalli Bey got his supplies here.

Jimmy sat and listened to the two of them talking in a low tone. What they said was beyond him. He saw the old man looking at him in a condoling fashion, and he suddenly remembered he was supposed to be the lost girl's lover. Suddenly Mr. Yakoub leaned over and said in English:

"Mr. Lekegian, here, he says there is a Syrian girl in Melwalli Bey's house. She was there while the Bey went to Siwah. You see? I told you. Now Melwalli Bey is come back, but the girl—he don't want her. She,"—here Mr. Yakoub giggled—"she fight all the time! And Mr. Lekegian say Melwalli Bey bring back two dancing girls, Ouled Naïls, from the desert. You understand?"

"Yes," said Jimmy. "I know the Ouled Naïls. I saw them at Laghouat. What next?"

At first Jimmy thought his young friend had reached the end of his rope. He gnawed his thumb. But he suddenly sprang up and went out into the shop, where there was a telephone. He began a passionate declamation into the thing, whirling the crank in a frenzied fashion. Jimmy strolled to the door and watched him. He was speaking with great rapidity. Jimmy heard the word "American." Then more and yet more conversation. And a sudden conclusion. Mr. Yakoub rang off, smiling.

"You owe me two hundred piastres!" he exclaimed in a ringing voice.

"Where is she?" asked Jimmy.

"We go now," replied the young man, as though he were the owner of magic carpets and the keys of all the cities.

He remembered the scented night as they drove beneath the sycamores, and the fireflies among the shrubs. The sparkle of the trolley on the wire among the leaves, when a jangling open tram car went past. The glimpses of villas through the trees, the residences so dear to the French in North Africa, verandaed and homelike, yet with a faint suggestion about them of being the abodes of the mistresses of kings in exile. The smell of jasmine. The distant glare of Alexandria. And the house, the garden of the Bey.

He remembered a large reception room, with Berber blankets and weapons on the walls, and with eagles, in glass cases, whose prominent and malevolent eyeballs reflected the light of the lamps with a stern, magnified stare. The pathetic heads of gazelles stretched out from the walls, as though straining to watch their stuffed enemies below, their terror persisting into the Beyond.

And he remembered Melwalli Bey, a man very much as Mr. Yakoub would be in twenty years' time. He was polite and smiling. He spoke easily and well, of Biskra and Ghardaïa. When he heard the name of Achmed Ben Yalloul, who had entertained his guest in the Atlas, his manner changed to sincerity and pleasure. Would the visitor like to witness a dance of the Ouled Naïls? They were about to begin. He, Melwalli Bey, had a party of friends from Cairo. As for the young friend of Monsieur, since receiving the telephone message from his secretary he had had inquiries made. One of his staff had been a little hasty. For himself, he had not even seen her. Now would the visitor honour his poor place by witnessing . . . The young friend? Ah, but she was already gone, in a motor car, to her house.

He remembered the dancers, too, as one remembers grandiose and ominous dreams. He saw them at the end of a darkened room, where tall Nubians, like statues of bronze and ebony, held smoking torches. He saw them, that strange vital race of mountaineers, whose women descend to the cafés of the oases and coast towns of Algeria and are coveted by the wealthy men of those places because of their ferocious and plangent artistry. They expressed, in their supple and rhythmic posturings, the fundamental instincts of the desert people. He heard the music, too, that came out of the flame-lit gloom—hoarse sobbing flutes and impudent boyish fifes, drums like the shattering collisions of coffins overturned by ghouls, the faint heart-piercing plaints of mandolins, like the cries of departing spirits. He remembered it all, as a barbaric setting to the poignant errand on which he had been bound.

And when the shining French motor car of Melwalli Bey stopped (for the second time that evening) in the Rue des Sœurs, just off the Place Mohammed Aly, Jimmy Russell decided that he would go up and see the thing to a finish. Mr. Yakoub, with his two hundred piastres, and an extra fifty for a guarantee of good faith, shook his hand with extraordinary vigour and went away laughing, and vanished into the great lighted square as though he were indeed but the embodiment of the city's enigmatic complexity, and was now absorbed into it once more. Jimmy saw him next day, in the Royal Etrurian Bank, a pen behind his ear, counting little heaps of gold and laughing like a child, a pretty child, at play.

So he went up, and for a moment, as he stood at the door and tapped, he had an unpleasant hallucination that he had been asleep and had dreamed about Melwalli Bey. That passed, and Captain Linder opened the door.

"Come in," he said.

Jimmy was aware of a hurried exit to the other room as he entered. Captain Linder frowned.

"Just as well you looked in again," he remarked. "You see, it is all right."

"That's good," said Jimmy. "I was wondering."

"Yes," said Captain Linder. "She was away. You might say, she was detained."

Jimmy looked round. The dust had disappeared. There was a faint odour of food and tobacco in the air. The vases held fresh flowers. He heard vigorous sounds from the next room as of some one engaged in putting things straight. He looked at the captain. "Detained," repeated Captain Linder. "So it shows how dangerous it is to jump to conclusions. I nearly did it myself. Visiting friends, that's all."

"Well," said Jimmy, taking a cigarette, "I'm glad."

"Nor it isn't all, neither," went on the captain. He reached back from where he sat and took a letter from the little buffet. "This came while she was away. I found it when I came up. You didn't notice perhaps. It says——"

The door of the other room opened swiftly, as though the woman in there had mustered her courage and achieved it at last, and Marie Mansour entered the room. She was pale, and there were dark hollows under her eyes, but she smiled a little and bowed. She had that patient provocative expression Jimmy had noted in the photographs, as though she did not quite understand, but wished to gratify the object of her adoration.

"It says," went on Captain Linder, reaching out and taking the girl's hand, "that Eugenio Arouani, Number Twelve Hundred and Seven, died in the hospital of Pantelleria one month ago. So you see," he added, putting down the letter and looking severely at his visitor, "it's better to wait and not jump to conclusions."

Jimmy saw the girl look down at her lover with an expression of profoundly maternal solicitude, as though she had suddenly understood that men's happiness lies in illusions, while for women there is the more perilous adventure of seeing beyond, into reality.

THE VIRGIN OF LORETO

DURING the long years of loneliness in Italy she had acquired the habit of talking to herself, as though she were an actress learning a part. So indeed she was. It sometimes seemed to her that her whole life, since she had left her home in New York and had come to Europe, was only an intolerably protracted overture for a distasteful drama. And that drama seemed upon the point of beginning. She could see, as it were, the curtain trembling before it went up.

But as she sat on the worn and ancient steps leading up to the door of San Ciriaco and brooded upon the city of Ancona fringing the Adriatic shore, it was she who was trembling. Time had not only revealed to her that she could not sing. It had shown her what she considered other deficiencies, of character and spirit, and the tears blurred the blue horizon in front of her. She was thirty-one, and she played the piano in the motion picture house on the Corso Mazzini. She lived in a tiny apartment up four flights, just off the Piazza Cavour.

On either side of her, as she sat, crouched the two monstrous figures, of leonine aspect, in the worn red stone of Verona, who guard the Thirteenth Century porch of the Duomo. They seemed to be listening, in stony silence, and with expressions of ferocious antagonism, to her faint yet vehement whispers, while beneath their heavy paws a lamb and a serpent remained rigid, in eternal resignation to their fate. Sometimes she gave a start and looked over her shoulder at the heavy leather curtain of the door, and her lips continued to move as though she were addressing some one within the building and defying him to controvert

her passionate assertions. And then she would return to her contemplation of the blue Adriatic, her slender hands gripping the old bead bag. The violence of her emotions was expressed in convulsive movements of her left shoulder, and a heavy pursing of her mouth when she paused in her hurried speech, her dreadful indictment concluded. She appeared to be waiting for the verdict of eternity.

She often talked to herself. Signorina Giulia Alessandro, who lived in the room below Olga Mores, used to remark to her gentlemen friends, when they called on her, that the lady upstairs must be unhappy. The gentlemen friends, who were not invariably of irreproachable moral character, developed no interest in unhappy women, and Olga Mores, who heard them on the stairs descending to the street, with occasional hilarious outbursts of masculine laughter, remained unmolested up in her stuffily furnished room.

This talking, however, was a kind of solace to her wounded spirit. It was a substitute for thought, as so many things are in this world. It was when she remained silent that memory became clear and agonizing. And to her distorted sense of justice that man, whom she had heard and seen in the motion picture house last night, was responsible for the failure of her life. There could be no mistake in her recognition of the big burly form and the full hearty voice. The same as ten years ago. Up in the front seats she had glimpsed him through the potted plants that screened her and her piano from the audience. Luke Leicester, the origin of all her misfortunes, hardly changed at all save for a short beard.

And yet from any other point of view save that of a sensitive injured woman Luke Leicester had been extraordinarily, inexplicably kind and generous. Even Luke Leicester himself, promoter, adventurer, exploiter, and

member of innumerable associations, societies, clubs, and leagues for the development of commercial relations, had been struck by his own kindness and generosity. It is only just to say that the sinister aspect of his attitude towards the handsome widow Natalie Mores and her pretty accomplished daughter had never struck him. Yet that daughter, ten years later, sitting on the steps of San Ciriaco in Ancona, and reflecting upon the unexpected appearance of her benefactor the night before, was trembling with resentment over the way in which he had taken hold of their lives and separated them and set going the train of events leading up to the present.

They had been so happy, Olga said to herself, before Luke Leicester had come to the apartment on One Hundred and Forty-seventh Street, so close to Riverside Drive you could see the river from the front windows. Luke's windows they were, after that, because Luke was the expansive and well-heeled business man, renting the two front rooms and delighting her mother's heart with the solidity and excellence of his belongings. Olga bit her lip as she thought how he had so subtly inspired hopes in her mother's breast. Yes, he was a widower, and he seemed to grow larger and burlier as he good-humouredly pinched the daughter's cheek and said something about liking the job of being in charge of such a fine daughter.

They had been "so happy" before, she and her mother together. Olga believed this because she had been one of those girls who, deep down in their characters, are spiritually indolent. She had suspected, what she had since discovered to be true, that being an artist entails a frightful strain upon the soul as well as the body, entails sacrifices and agonies of self-dedication. And she flinched.

For her mother, however, the following year had been a galaxy of starry days and hopes. Mrs. Mores, or Madame

La Mores, as she was called by her pupils, taught singing to the daughters of the surrounding cliff dwellers. She was of Italian descent, and had married a tremendous swell employed at the Ecuadorian Consulate. The late Señor Mores had been a singular product of Latin America, the Paris Quartier, and New York City. Passionately addicted to the arts, he sang in a vibrating baritone, his fine beard pressed to his shirt front and his magnificent shoulders raised as he sought a deep note. He painted, too, and the apartment on One Hundred and Forty-seventh Street could have dispensed with paper on the walls, so effectually were these covered with the late señor's grandiose canvases. Luke Leicester scored heavily with the widow when he declared in solemn tones that the picture covering one end of his sitting room, The Mating of Semiramis, fourteen feet by nine, was the greatest work of art he had ever seen. And every morning, when the alert and robust Luke opened his eyes, he saw a gigantic still-life on the opposite wall of his bedroom, fruit and flowers of Gargantuan dimensions, piled on a dish as large as a hip bath. Such was Señor Bartolomeo Mores, who had died suddenly when Olga was twelve, leaving behind him a passionately cherished memory and about four hundred dollars in the bank. So Mrs. Mores became Madame La Mores, and when she could, took boarders.

They came and went, Olga remembered, until Luke came and remained, with his formidably heavy English leather baggage, his bag of golf sticks, his "few sticks," as he called them, of valuable antique furniture—moving out some of Madame's gimcrack Eighth Avenue stuff—and his tremendous personality. That's what it was—personality. He said so. It was his capital, his key to prosperity. The atmosphere of the house, of a gathering of people, changed, oriented towards him

at once when he came in. What he did no one seemed to know. He had desk room in some office in the Roaring Forties, and sometimes men carrying baggage covered with hotel labels from distant cities like Calcutta and Bogotá would spend the night on his cot bed. Sometimes he had parties, and expensive ladies and distinguished men would make a pleasant noise until midnight. He was genuine enough. To the wistful little girl, whose mother drove her relentlessly through her vocal lessons and practice, he was a magnificent person. She would pause in making his bed and touch one thing and another of his, rich, genuine, costly affairs. Once, in a mood of daring, she found the key in the lock of his humidor, and opened it, gazing at the boxes of fat brown cigars, inhaling the voluptuous odour of Corona-Coronas and the fragrance of Turkish tobacco. There were fascinating pictures, too, of Luke dressed like a Chinese mandarin, Luke in an academic gown and cap, Luke in Alpine costume, Luke and ravishing girls in motor cars and at the races. It was characteristic of Luke Leicester that the girls in these pictures always revealed as much of their legs as custom deems tolerable. These pictures were often signed underneath with names like Toto or Zuzu or Lilla, and bore humorous legends in bold, dashing penmanship. Several announced themselves to be Luke's "severest critic." This was all Luke to the life, and Olga, wandering shyly and hungrily among these wonders of the masculine world, thought it all most marvellous and, somehow, dangerous.

What that danger was she could not have told anybody then, because she was too inexperienced to analyze the impressions she derived from watching her mother and the boarder. The fact is, Luke at one time, when the Lillas and Totos were more scarce than usual, had serious thoughts of marrying again. It was then he dropped the

remark about wanting Olga for a daughter. He often gave her a fatherly or semi-fatherly hug, drawing her to his knee and pinching her cheek while he listened to Madame's plans for the future. And in those plans there lay, unknown to them all, the germ of Olga's fortunes.

Madame La Mores was a good vocalist and a capable teacher, but she was blind on one side. She believed her daughter had the voice of a great singer. It was her grand passion, after her husband's memory, her obsession and her weakness. Olga herself was a living sacrifice to this fixed idea of her mother. She practised all day and every day. And whenever Luke Leicester had a fit of domesticity and spent the evening at home, in a purple smoking jacket with bronze frogs and facings, Madame would bring round the conversation to Olga's voice.

This sort of thing was bound to have its effect on Olga Mores. She began to believe it. There was her mother's Italian lineage. There was her own name, Olga La Mores. It was an asset, in itself, surely. Such ideas had their effect on Luke too. It probably helped to confirm him in his resolution. One evening he took Olga on his knee and drew her head down on his shoulder. Olga closed her eyes in ecstasy. She was always able to keep separate in her mind the emotion of the moment and the hazards of the future.

"I'll tell you what we'll do, madame," he said. "We'll send this little girl to Italy and give her the best training possible. And when she returns to sing at the Metropolitan she can pay us back."

For a moment her mother could only exclaim in a stifled voice: "Oh! Oh! I don't know what to say," and clasp her hands.

It was an astonishingly romantic proposition to come from the burly business man. And the way he spoke in the

plural "we" made the whole thing a delectable dream, without a trace of patronage.

"Only one thing, madame," he had remarked later after jotting down a few notes on the back of an envelope, "we ought to have an understanding our little girl doesn't crab our game by getting married."

The most critical judge, reviewing the case, would have given Luke Leicester merely credit for minimum common sense in this. But Olga Mores, looking back at it all, felt he had taken a despicable advantage of his position. Viewed from this high place above Ancona, he was seen to be deliberately wrecking a girl's life. She had been walking out with a young man at Columbia University, a young man who was now known as the author of a very prosperous play. Olga shrank from admitting it even to herself, but the chances had been that they would have drifted apart anyhow. "Unfair! Unfair!" she muttered to herself, nevertheless.

But Madame, recovering, had taken no chances with this marvellous opportunity to see her daughter a diva. She was prepared to make sacrifices herself. She insisted upon paying interest on the money, but Luke waved her away. He suggested she could give him a picture to keep as a souvenir. One of her dear husband's? Well, not that. He couldn't think of asking her for one of those. But that picture of a church interior, in the hall. Could he have that?

Madame had been scandalized at the modesty of his demands. He could have had The Mating of Semiramis if he had asked for it. But he said he wanted the smaller canvas for his sister's house in Washington. She would appreciate it.

Olga remembered this incident because of what had hap-

pened long afterwards. An art student in Florence had shown her a magazine with a reproduction of that very picture, Nuns in Saint Ouen, it was called. An expert had pronounced it a genuine Ruysdael, and a collector had bought it for seven thousand dollars. She had sat looking at the page for a long time, as though stunned. That was very like Luke Leicester indeed, she thought. And added it to the great indictment of the man who had grasped her whole life in his big capable hands, giving her the great glorious golden chance to succeed, a chance which she discovered she could not take.

What a time that had been! Her mother gave her no rest. She had to take up German. Italian and French she already had, enough for the purpose. No stone was left unturned. But to the sensitive young creature there was something revolting in the casual way Luke Leicester took the whole affair as a side show. The money was so little to him at that time, he seemed unaware of his munificence. Olga tried to explain her dislike to herself by suspecting him of trying to get her out of the way. Madame La Mores, who achieved a wonderful renewal of youthful spirits at this time, took this view of the case very lightly. It appeared to her a charming finale to a pretty story, for the daughter's benefactor to become one of the family. But she was so busy writing to a famous teacher in Milan, selecting clothes, obtaining a passport, and poring over steamship sailing lists, that perhaps she did not read her child's mind very deeply.

And what did Luke Leicester think about the whole business? Strangely enough, it was a source of the most poignant suffering of Olga Mores now that she was not certain whether he had believed in her talent or not. It seemed to her that he had been like a god, stooping for one brief moment to reach down and hurl a shower of gold

into her brazen tower, where she had been happy enough in an indolent way.

Her memories of that time were entirely of hustling activity and a vague desire to be let alone. It was not that she did not want to sing but that she did not want to leave New York. She was a New Yorker. She had two girl friends across the landing who were studying dancing, and she would have liked to go with them, perhaps finding a small part somewhere by and by, until she got married. But her mother was consumed with an extraordinary conviction. Olga must restore the fortunes of the family. Olga must strain every nerve to justify Mr. Leicester's faith in her future. And during all these ten years Olga had never been sure in her heart that Luke Leicester had had any such faith.

During those ten years, of struggle and trial and eventual disillusionment, Olga had gradually conceived a motive for Luke's generosity. It is not easy to say how she explained so sinister a scheme against her, unless she credited Luke Leicester with a hobby for getting successful women into his power. She, being one of the unsuccessful, had mercifully been forgotten. After her mother died she had written Luke a wild foolish letter, full of reproaches and accusations, vague and terrible. He had not replied, and the idea had become fixed in her mind that he had cast her off and wished to be rid of her as a troublesome encumbrance.

And it was during that period of black oblivion following her final discovery that she lacked the voice and the temperament for a career that she brooded upon her future and began to elaborate an imaginary atonement. That it took the form of violence and possibly death was due to her character, which was imaginative and disdainful. It was extraordinary how she had changed from the fresh, piquant

creature whom the stalwart manly Luke Leicester had liked to take on his knee. She had never been in want of food and shelter. Her skill as a pianist and even as a vocalist in small parts provided her with sufficient funds for a decent living. What she had lost was faith and hope. Her pride had never healed. She had sought consolation in living in seclusion, until all her instincts became dormant. She had visions of a dramatic onslaught upon the man who had sent her to seek her own undoing. And because she felt that nothing could ever demolish that strong assured personality save death, she brooded upon scenes in which she assailed him with burning bitter words, unveiling the havoc he had wrought in her life by sending her to a career beyond her powers. She imagined herself accusing him of battening on their ignorance of that painting her mother had given him in her innocence, unmasking his sceret designs upon herself, and denouncing him because of her mother's death alone in New York. He had been hunting tigers and looking up a nickel mine in Asia at the time; but Olga decided in her own heart that he could have done something.

And then, as he tried to make some sort of defence, she would take the stiletto from her sleeve and plunge it into his neck.

Well, for once she would hold the stage.

Yet, for a few hours after seeing Luke Leicester in the cinema palace, she had failed to connect that fine burly form, that gruff port-wine voice, and that aggressive personality with the protagonist of her dreams. She had even spoken of him to a new acquaintance, the young man who had been talking to the manager of the cinema when she entered the office, and who had been introduced to her as a fellow countryman by Signor Mangarelli. Jimmy Russell, he called himself, even having the name Jimmy instead of

James upon the card he gave her. A cool, resourceful, good-looking young man with a short curved nose, an agreeable toothbrush moustache, and competent gray-blue eyes. Almost before she was aware of being taken out of her usual secluded state of mind, her almost sullen withdrawal from the world of living men and women, he had spoken of New York, where his office was situated, of New Hampshire, where he was raised, and had invited her to be his guide to the cathedral next day. There was something so entirely adequate about him that in a vague, not unpleasant fashion he recalled the burly Luke Leicester. He was a traveller, too, seeking unusual pictures for a New York syndicate.

And as they lunched that day at a nice little restaurant in the Via Palombella, which he had induced her to select, he being the stranger, she had mentioned the curious experience of seeing in the theatre "a very old friend." Jimmy Russell had looked at her, politely puzzled, when she explained her reluctance to make herself known to the very old friend.

"He has probably forgotten me."

"Well, you might give him a chance to prove it," he suggested quietly. "I think I know him. He is at the Hotel Roma, where I am staying. He is an oil man, just back from Bessarabia. Travelling with a baron. A young Roumanian. Baron Something Ivernik, I think—I'm not sure. They are going to Paris."

"And where are you going?" she asked casually.

"I am staying here for a day or two. I want to go to Loreto. Do you know it?"

She nodded. "Yes, I have been there. Why do you wish to go?"

He told her he wanted to get some photographs of the Holy House, which legend says was carried across the sea

from Nazareth. There was also an image, covered with precious stones and Oriental pearls, an image carved by one of the apostles from cedar of Lebanon.

"You mean the Virgin of Loreto," she muttered. And he nodded in turn, his face full of enthusiasm.

"You must go with me as a guide," he said. "I will arrange it with Signor Mangarelli. We are doing some business together."

And now, as Olga Mores sat on the steps of San Ciriaco while Jimmy Russell was taking his pictures of the crypt and the Chapel of Our Lady of Grief, she was experiencing a reaction from the mood of companionship and sensible good temper which the young man had imposed upon her all the afternoon. For a while she had forgotten the principal obsession of her life. He had taken pity on her and tried to cheer her up. Or perhaps he was merely using her for his own ends. Men never forgot their own interests, she believed. She wondered what he would say if she told him of Luke Leicester's luck with that painting her mother had given him in gratitude. Luke was now "an oil man." Very wealthy, no doubt. Wealth derived from others. Indestructibly jolly and prosperous. Travelling with a baron. How like Luke, who had once brought a Russian princess to the house on One Hundred and Forty-seventh Street! It was curious that Jimmy Russell's mention of a baron, a young Roumanian baron, should have revived her memories of Luke even more than the sight of him had done—had strengthened her imagination to conceive afresh that sudden dramatic expiation of his insufferable success. She glanced at the stone beast beside her, with the lamb in his heavy jaws, and told herself she detected a likeness between that ancient image of ferocity and Luke. Something in the poise of the leonine head. She stood up with a sudden lithe, graceful movement, as Jimmy Russell emerged

from the leather-covered doorway of the church. He was struck by the expression on her face as she turned towards him.

"Are you mad at me for keeping you so long?" he asked in concern.

"No," she said. "Why do you ask?"

"You looked as though you were ready to shoot me," he replied, slipping his camera into its big leather case and folding up the tripod.

"I'm sorry," she said. "You must excuse me. I have troubles you know nothing of."

"Then I am all the more anxious for you to take dinner with me this evening. Drown dull care, you know. What about it? We'll invite your old friend, if you like."

Olga, her thin pale face almost transparent with a sudden pallor as the blood fled back to her heart, placed her hand on her breast and bowed her head as though in profound disquiet.

"I insist," said Jimmy Russell, taking her arm and leading her towards the Via Guasco. It was late afternoon. The sun was dropping behind the Apennines, and the sea was a placid sheet of pearl gray satin. The hum of activity about the port was dying, and long lines of coal workers could be seen hurrying towards the gates. A steamer, her forefoot and propeller half out of the water, her high blotched flanks revealing almost indelicately her age and her shabby way of living, thrashed her way hastily out of the harbour, and set a course to the southward, bound for Black Sea grain ports.

"You seem to think you are in charge," said Olga in what she meant to be a harsh tone.

"Well, to a certain extent, yes," he agreed, smiling. "That's a man's job, I fancy. Of course, now, you—" he paused and looked at her critically and with considerable

approval—"of course, you are strong and independent and perhaps dislike being babied. All the same, allow me, won't you?"

"Me strong and independent? What are you talking about? That's not the general opinion, I can assure you."

"How do you know that, Miss Mores? Do you know, I fancy you underrate yourself."

"For example?" she asked with a prim smile. He admired her profile. Jimmy Russell was not in the habit of claiming to be an artist, but he had a simple and accurate conception of female beauty. Slender blondes were his favourite type; and Olga Mores, although her hair was brown and her eyes brown too, gave him the impression of being a blonde for all that. She had the supple slimness of a healthy active maturity, and her skin had a fine ivory pallor which to his æsthetic sense was beautiful.

"Well," he replied to her scornful query. "You find an old friend, you tell me, yet you think so little of yourself you doubt if he remembers you, and you don't want to put yourself to the trouble of finding out."

"You don't understand," she said a trifle coldly.

Jimmy Russell said nothing at all in reply to this. When a woman says a man does not understand, she is merely announcing that she does not intend to let him understand. Jimmy Russell had wandered far over the earth, and he had garnered not only many fine pictures, but a few gems of wisdom as well. He had learned, for example, that nothing but unhappiness comes to the man who preoccupies himself too closely with women. For himself, he preserved a cheerful attitude of receptive courtesy. Olga Mores was a type he liked. He thought she was probably living, as many American women do in Italy, on an income too small for America. When she gave him one of her rare direct glances he was attracted by the purity and delicacy of her

face, an impression that was marred in fleeting moments by the spinsterish pursing of her lips. He began to tell her more of his own experiences. It was, he often thought afterwards, like talking to a saint. Olga Mores, who had lived so sheltered in One Hundred and Forty-seventh Street, and who had remained ever since hidden behind the barrier of a sense of failure which had hardened into resentment towards the man who had made that failure inevitable, did not know she was making this impression on another man who was being kind to her. She was amused at his telling her she was strong and independent. He went on explaining about the Caucasus and the black amber of Erzeroum; about the Matterhorn and the volcanoes of Costa Rica; of emerald mines in the Andes and the sulphur workings in Sicily, all of which he had visited. She was thinking of the robust, prosperous, sociable, materialistic Luke Leicester.

"Why," she asked Jimmy Russell suddenly, "do you take all this trouble about me?"

"There's nothing very mysterious about it," he returned, smiling. "You strike me as being worth all the trouble I am taking, and more. Why do you adopt that attitude towards yourself?"

"What attitude?" she asked.

"You know what I mean, I guess. Talking as though you were of no importance and, well, not attractive."

"Because it's true, I suppose. How I envy you, going about, seeing the world, and doing the work you like! I—I am nobody, a failure."

"Is that so?" he remarked impatiently. "I think you'd better wake up and take a more rational view. What's all this about a failure? Tell me."

She did. As they came down into the city she was telling him much more than she had intended at first. And while Jimmy Russell was interested in the way life had

worked out for Olga Mores he could not share her feeling of failure. It seemed to him she had achieved something very fine indeed, something that was visible to him in her face, delicate as an ivory cameo, in her slender virginal beauty of form, and in the purposeful completeness of her gestures, her movements, and the softly modulated resonance of her voice.

"That's the maddest thing to say," he remarked when she tried to explain how she had come to regard Luke Leicester. "You live alone too much. A girl like you, harbouring such feelings! I don't believe it! You are spoofing."

"You have never suffered," she said quietly. "If you had, you would know that these thoughts come to everybody. One feels as though the only way to find peace is to strike down the cause of one's suffering, and then—die."

Jimmy looked at her in silence as they walked. She was gazing at the fortress on Capodimonte, above the city, a rapt expression of inexorable rectitude in her uplifted face. He was reminded of a comparison he had already made to himself—that she was like a saint. It was during this walk down into Ancona that he began to think of her fancifully in connection with Loreto, the holy shrine on the cliffs above the blue sea, on the way to Ascoli. He could not know that this quality of hers came from her character, which seemed to her weak, yet which led her to put so small a value on herself, while that spiritual indolence preserved her from experimenting with the latest styles in modern emotions.

"Now, please!" he said sharply. "You are not going to spoil our trip?"

She smiled a little. "No," she said. "But you must excuse me this evening. I am tired. I shall be very tired after

the performance. And we must start early, about six o'clock."

"All right then. At six o'clock. I'll get the hotel to order a good car. And please drop—you know what I mean. Good-night."—"And good luck, *mia cara vergine*," he added under his breath as she vanished into the cavernous entrance of the house just off the Piazza Cavour.

"Now, what does this mean, hey? Yes, it's little Olga, by heavens it is! Well, I'm glad, I'm glad!" And Luke Leicester gave her another hug.

"And I'm glad too!"

Olga heard her own voice in amazement. They were in the shadow of the arches by the side door of the Cinema Carducci, out of which she had hastened, without knowing it, into the arms of Luke Leicester. It was like plunging into the warm flood of a life-giving stream of sanity and human kindliness. They walked away, Luke's big arm around her, towards her apartment. The exuberant personality of the man seemed to her suddenly released emotions to have increased with the years and his girth. In five minutes he had swept away the growths of ten years in her mind.

"Letter when your mother died? I never got it. Never! I dropped a fortune in Korea, Olga, my girl. If I hadn't had a good friend in Kobé, who'd had my help once, I'd have been a beachcomber. As it was, he loaned me enough to get home and start again. I was all right for a year or two, and then the bottom dropped out of Orinoco oil. I was too deep in and got drowned. But I'm all right now, don't you worry. I can tell you I wrote and I wrote to the last address I had of yours, and I was pretty blue because I couldn't spare the time or the money to come and hunt for you. Olga, I really believed you were dead, my girl! For I

never got the letter. When that camera chap, Jimmy Russell, comes up to me in the hotel to-night and tells me Olga Mores is playing the piano in a movie down the street I think my eyes must have stood out like door knobs!"

"Did they?" she smiled.

"Just like door knobs!" he repeated, with whimsical solemnity, as though telling a story to a child. He began to be serious. He told her that while he was in low water his daughter had died with her second baby and he was now more or less alone. The Totos and Zuzus disappeared in the lean years. Now he was on top of the world again, he was likely to be lonely. The "severest critics" generally vanish with the easy money. He was travelling to Paris and New York with a Baron Ivernik, a rather reckless young gentleman, but owner of great oil-producing areas.

"You and I, we'll settle down and have a place over at Greenwich or Stamford, and play golf, eh? No more wandering for old Luke. Gosh, but I'm glad to see you again!"

And again Olga heard that astounding voice of hers saying: "I'm glad, too!"

But Signorina Giulia Alessandro, who was just putting her key in her door, was even more astounded when the Signorina Mores appeared round the curve of the stair on the arm of a very fine man. Giulia's mouth opened, which revealed her stupefaction as well as a number of defective teeth, and she filled the orifice with a clenched fist as her round black eyes followed the incredible spectacle up the next flight. "Maria!" she breathed, and went into her own place, very much upset, because she was a shrewd little person and knew perfectly well that Signorina Mores was exactly what Jimmy Russell had called her under his breath. Giulia had come home early from the Politeama because a friend of hers was arriving on the night train

to visit her. A country girl, from near Rimini, who wanted to go and pray to the Virgin of Loreto.

Luke Leicester sat on the bed in the high narrow apartment, fusty with heavy hangings, and listened to Olga's story of her failure. Not that he cared about that now. He knew that the price of success a woman singer pays is a very heavy one. He knew that there was a good deal of luck about all success. That was why he said always, get money. Then you can endure the other failures of life. Get On, Get Honour, Get Honest was Luke's slogan, and he achieved it all. Olga took up his cane, a finely polished affair with a silver handle chased with arabesque designs.

"A pasha gave it to me," he told her. "Draw it out. Gave it to me for saving his life, he said. Yes, pull the handle."

To her astonishment a gleaming blade came out of the interior of the thing as she followed his instructions. A long, straight, pointed stiletto, with patches of corrosion that resembled bloodstains. She shivered at the sudden realization of her disordered fancies, trembling so that she could not direct the point into the cane again. Luke reached out and did it for her.

"Useful, hey? Never know when a thing like that might save the situation." He struck the floor with it sharply and smiled. Giulia Alessandro heard the tap and wondered.

"So you're going out with that young chap to-morrow?" said Luke, folding his hands on the silver handle. She nodded.

"To Loreto. He wants to go and has asked Signor Mangarelli for permission for me."

"And to-morrow night, mind, dinner with me, both of you, at the Roma. When we get back from Perugia."

"And the baron?" asked Olga. Luke scowled.

"A rake rather," he muttered. "I shall have trouble, I am afraid, before we get to New York. He has no sense.

Thinks because he's rich he can do as he likes. But it's good policy for me to humour him."

When Luke went, which was very soon after this, Olga, although she wanted to sleep, could not. She heard voices downstairs in Giulia Alessandro's apartment, and the prim expression came into her face. But the voices were those of women, of Giulia and another, in an ebb and flow of excited altercation. She heard crying and a fall, as though a woman had thrown herself on the floor. At length Olga slept, dreaming foolishly of Luke and his sword-cane and Jimmy Russell photographing a lion with a lamb in his paws, until daybreak. Olga loved the first hour of the dawn. It stole into her chamber like a pure spirit; between the heavy draped curtains the pearly shape of light was like a translucent saint hovering there. At these times, lying quiescent in her bed in the shadows, Olga was happiest. She became faintly aware of something her mother, Madame La Mores, had never discovered, that she had a genius, not for song, but for goodness. Jimmy Russell suspected it, and it is possible the good burly Luke had his ideas on the subject. And Giulia Alessandro, who rarely arose before eleven, knew it too.

This morning Giulia was about. She seemed not to have been to bed. There were sounds below. On the window ledge Olga saw strange garments airing, and once, as she looked over her flower pots of primulas, she saw Giulia's plump arms holding out a carpet bag, to beat the dust from its folds. And when there floated up, about half-past six, the harsh snarl of a motor horn, and Olga hastened downstairs, dressed in a linen dust coat and a motor veil, she heard a muffled scream. She saw Giulia's door fly open, and behind Giulia there was a drawn, frightened face, while two bare arms were struggling to force their owner past Giulia, who barred the way.

"What is the matter?" asked Olga, astonished. Giulia put a finger to her lips.

"Nothing, signorina. This is Reina Barbati, a cousin of mine from Macconara Alta. She thinks the noise of the *automobili* is the soldiers and is frightened. She is from the *campagna*."

"Tell her she is foolish. It is the motor car of my friend. We go to Loreto."

"Perhaps we see you there, signorina. To-day I take Reina to—to see the Virgin. *A rivederci!* There you are, Reina. The signorina says it is only a *teuff-teuff*. Go in!" The door slammed.

And soon Olga and Jimmy Russell were on their way to Loreto. The car was old and not in very good repair, and the chauffeur was not very experienced. The carburetor gave trouble. The two passengers often sat and watched the dark, sun-tanned young man scowling at his engine with that expression of lofty irritation so many Latins adopt towards machinery. At Castellaccio they had an early lunch or late breakfast while the chauffeur went in search of a brother-in-law who had a blacksmith's shop and might remedy a defective spring bolt. Jimmy Russell spoke of Luke Leicester. He was tactfully humorous, and Olga admitted how she had changed her mind when her old friend had come to see her, "and explained everything. After all, it is my fault, not his, that I was a failure."

"I told you what I thought of that," said Jimmy. "Leicester was about this morning. He said his young friend the baron hadn't put in an appearance at all last night, and they were supposed to start for a trip to Perugia by the six o'clock train. He's gone without him, I believe. He might have come with us, only . . ."

"No, he wanted me to have to-day with you, I know. We'll see him to-night."

"I think your friend Luke is the right sort," said Jimmy decidedly.

"He has changed," she said in a low voice. "He has had troubles too. I did not know."

"Most of us have them, more or less. Everybody," he said gravely.

They saw it all, that wonderful shrine on the cliff above the blue sea. They wandered through the chambers where the treasures were stored, and stared at the huge tapestries and the cabinets of precious vestments. They saw the Holy House too, with its costly silver lamps and the blaze of amethysts, emeralds, rubies, and pearls, of diamonds and gold, enshrining the mysterious figure behind the altar. To Jimmy Russell it was the most enchanting kind of symbolism. It was a never-ending gesture of veneration, the pouring forth of material treasure before the shrine of virginal virtue and beauty. He took his pictures, and astonished some peasant women by asking them to form a group in front of the *trattoria* where he and Olga had feasted on rice and fish and a strong topaz-coloured wine. The women stood as he directed, their dark impassive faces not much lighter in colour than the Virgin's, which was carved from cedar of Lebanon. Olga noted their blue pleated kirtles and high blue bodices, their scarves striped in brown, green, and scarlet, the strange designs about their waists, and the tight sleeves exaggerating the broad bosoms. She watched the man at his work, conscious of a feeling that to him she owed a sort of spiritual regeneration at a time when solitude and the cherishing of sombre memories had left her desperate and forlorn.

It was well on in the afternoon when the chauffeur appeared from his retreat, much to their astonishment, with two policemen riding beside him in the car. Probably

relatives, thought Jimmy Russell, as they came to a halt. He was surprised further when one of these men produced a paper. He took it and Olga watched the expression on his face change to an anxious gravity. "What is it?" she said. After a pause he told her.

"Matter enough," he muttered. "As far as I can make out, Leicester was stopped on his way to Perugia and brought back. He has telephoned to the police here to inform us. Baron Ivernik was stabbed during the night not far from the hotel but was only found this morning in a doorway and is dying in the hospital. They accuse Luke Leicester of this. He was out last night, and they found a sword-cane in his possession. That looks bad for him. He wants us to come back at once. Needs your help, I guess."

Olga sprang into the car.

"To the prefettura!" she cried. "Come! Lose not a moment. Please!"

They turned and drove down the village street to a dirty white building bearing the Royal Arms. Olga hurried into the office. When Jimmy followed she was talking rapidly in Italian to the officer on duty, waving the telephone message.

"Telephone at once!" she was saying. "I am Olga Mores, of the Cinema Carducci. Tell them to find Giulia Alessandro, who lives in the Via San Carlo, number eleven. Also her friend Reina Barbati, of Macconara Alta. But get Giulia Alessandro."

"But why?" growled the officer, his pencil in the air. He was a heavy Pescarese. "*Perchè, signorina?*"

"Because she saw Signor Leicester last night accompany me to my rooms upstairs. This American is my oldest friend. He befriended my mother. And because Reina Barbati, who arrived last night, this morning screamed and

tried to run away when she heard an automobile horn, thinking they had come for her. I wondered, but forgot. Now, quickly! And we will return to Ancona fast, fast!" She snapped her fingers, drew on her gloves and dust coat, and took Jimmy's arm. "Come!" she said. "Offer him extra to get home quick."

Once or twice, as they rode up and down the dusty hills between Loreto and Ancona, Jimmy Russell found himself forgotten, and he saw Olga's lips moving. There was an expression of preoccupied alarm in her eyes when she looked at him from time to time, as though she was more aware of the danger to Luke than he himself could be. And it seemed to him she was astonished as well, at a novel and shattering emotion—the astonishment of a self-centred human being suddenly thrust from that centre and forced to acknowledge the call of an unsuspected passion. Jimmy felt inadequate until she suddenly turned and put her hand on his arm.

"You must help. You can help. You know he came out to see me last night?"

"Yes, and I am prepared to swear I heard his voice when he came upstairs in the hotel and called down over the balustrade."

"What time?"

"About half after midnight."

"That must have been just as he came in from my place. That is important."

As they came into the city Jimmy told the man to go straight to the prefettura. They found Luke Leicester sitting in a bare little office, talking and smoking with an official. His face, very worried with a long day of anxious doubt, lightened as he saw them come in.

"Well, I just knew you'd come, you two," he said, tak-

ing their hands and then putting his own on their shoulders. "A nice kettle of fish eh? But it's all right."

"How?" demanded Olga peremptorily. "Have they found her? Have they got Giulia Alessandro?"

Luke nodded and, putting his hands in his pockets in his old nonchalant way, sat on the table sideways and included the lieutenant in the conversation. The young man, who knew a little English, was flattered.

"Yes, they got her, but she had sent the other girl away. Case of fright, I guess. Ivernik's not dead, but he nearly did for me. They showed him my photograph in the hospital, and he nodded. Meant he knew me, but the police claimed he meant I stabbed him. But he's conscious this evening, and he says it was eleven o'clock, near the station, it happened."

"But you were with me in the Via Carlos at that time," said Olga, very pale and breathless.

"Sure I was. I looked at my watch and told you the time."

"And I heard you come into the hotel," said Jimmy.

"Sure you did. I made noise enough. My water bottle was empty. It was that Turkish sword-cane nearly got me in dutch. These local sleuths couldn't believe that wasn't the weapon used."

"Well?" said Olga.

"Well, my girl, I guess you hit the bull's-eye the first go when you told them to hunt for Reina Barbati. Our young friend, Ladislas Ivernik, made a mistake. He'll probably recover, though he don't deserve to, but it'll be a long time before he tries his games again on a simple girl from the mountains. According to the Alessandro girl she didn't even screech. When he followed her from the station and spoke to her he'd had a drink or two, and she just took

the knife from her stocking and let drive at him, and he fell into the doorway of a warehouse. It's a wonder he didn't bleed to death."

"And what will they do?" asked Olga.

"Do? I don't know. Ivernik wants them to do nothing, naturally. They'll thrash round trying to find the Barbati girl, but I doubt if they'll do much unless he prosecutes. And she has a case, in a way."

"You are all clear," insisted Olga.

"Yes, but I want to have the matter settled."

"You'll do nothing of the kind," retorted the girl. "He got into trouble. He can get out of it. There are plenty of good advocates here. You will go home."

"I will, on one condition," said Luke, offering cigarettes all round. "And that is that you come with me. Think I'm going home to New York and leave you piano pounding here? Not likely. I need some one to look after me now I'm getting old."

"You certainly do," she muttered. She turned to a mirror hanging on the wall, to arrange her hair, and to hide from them the sudden emotion she knew must be visible in her face.

Far away from the Virgin of Loreto and the blue Adriatic there is a cottage on the Sound, where an elderly business man lives with his adopted daughter. Jimmy Russell, when he is in New York between his long journeys to the ends of the earth, will break his trip down to New Hampshire and call for a day's golf with Luke Leicester. To Jimmy, Olga Mores will always be the Virgin of Loreto. He watches her at the table or in the garden, and he is full of a novel and delightful admiration for the fine thing she has made of her life. He admires the clear and delicate seriousness of her face, the supple slenderness of her body.

He sees quite plainly, having some experience of life, that she has reached the summit of her existence and the crown of her happiness. There is an atmosphere of extraordinary peace about the house. The garden, with its view of the Sound, is an abode of quiet. There is a small marble statue in a nook among the trees, and it gives a touch of perfection to the scene. This is Olga's doing. And Jimmy, going away through the New England country, will wonder how often it must happen that a woman will have no real taste for the world at all, no talent for the arts. She will not even comprehend the perilous ecstasies of love as the world understands it. She will be, perhaps unknown to herself, a saint. She will have the most valuable, the most indestructible quality in the world, the quality before which men will ever pour down the treasures for which they toil, and which they will remember with gratitude in their hearts—a genius for simple goodness.

ON THE MALECÓN

"BATTLE–SCARRED" was the word his face brought to my mind as I came upon him lying in the evening sunlight on the broad coping of the sea wall of the Malecón. Five years since I'd seen him.

And it was like him to burst into a peal of terrible laughter. It was terrible because it comprised within its harsh and vibrating tones Mr. Ferguson's entire contempt for my theory of life and duty. Ferguson's laugh included his opinion of me, of my ship, and my captain, and it was not without a crow of astonishment at discovering that so pettifogging a person had managed to earn a living in the open market, "where a man's a man *and* has to stand on his own feet," as he once bitterly phrased it.

"You went back, then?" he remarked after we had shaken hands cautiously and given each other a shamefaced inspection common among seamen. "And how do you like earning your living?" And he broke again into that laughter which, as I have said, implied so many adverse criticisms of our ordinary human weaknesses and virtues.

But when I deflected his attention from my own peculiarities he lay down flat on his back, his hands clasped across his chest, his pale-blue Irish eyes regarding the deep-blue Havana sky with truculent amusement.

"Oh, I've got a perfectly wonderful tale to tell," he murmured hoarsely, and he gave the impression of having laid himself down there on the Malecón for the sole purpose of awaiting my arrival, to tell me his wonderful tale. Mr. Ferguson would never have any other sort of tale to tell, I felt sure. I sat down.

"I'm married," he said simply, and closed his eyes, so that for a moment he resembled a crusader's effigy on a tomb, his modish trousers and bizarre cravat vanishing as one gazed at the indomitably romantic features frozen into immobility before a fact which could not be blarneyed out of the way. He was married. That was the secret that eluded me when I set eyes on him at first. I had not foreseen that. I asked him to accept my felicitations and give me the particulars.

"Let's go and have something," I said.

"Well," replied Mr. Ferguson, "you were never very free with your drinks while we were in the Mediterranean, which I suppose was due to some idea of keeping me in me place." Here he swung his feet to the sidewalk, put his straw hat at a defiant angle, and stood up six feet and an inch. He made me think now of a *condottiere* out of a job.

"You usually had enough without my assistance," I reminded him mildly.

"True, O king," he assented with an absent chuckle. "Where do we go from here?"

I led the way. Almost at the point where the Prado debouches upon the Malecón a narrow side street runs into it at an acute angle, and the angle itself is a café, a thin isosceles triangle in shape, with doors open on all sides, generally affording a breeze. When I had navigated Mr. Ferguson across the belt of swiftly moving motor cars and sat him down at a marble-topped table by an open door where he could see the whole panorama of noble buildings, of sea and sky and the Morro Castle light swinging its pale beam in the brilliant air, his opinion of me rose somewhat.

And this was the tale he told me over the glasses of beer that followed. He sat at the little table, rolling and smoking many cigarettes from a little bag of tobacco he car-

ried in his breast pocket and looking out at the brilliant night of Havana.

Had I heard of the *Bucaramanga?* I had. She was the crack ship of the South American Mail Line in the old days before the war and had achieved temporary fame by being captured. I recalled that event. Well, the significance of his question came out when he added that he had happened to be there at the time.

"Now what do you mean by that?" I demanded. The tone of his voice implied that he had accidentally strolled upon the scene, which was in the South Atlantic Ocean, a thousand miles from land, when the *Bucaramanga*, a twelve-thousand-ton mail and passenger ship, was captured by an enemy raider.

He was not on the *Bucaramanga* in the first place, I was to understand. In fact, at the beginning of the war, so anxious was he to get away from it, to forget all about it, that he signed on in Liverpool on the *Popayan*, a cargo boat of the S. A. M. line bound for Amazon ports, and with a chance, so the superintendent told him, of exchanging into a river boat, whose second engineer wanted to come home and join up. As I was aware, Mr. Ferguson himself held cynical views about the war anyhow, and was not to be bamboozled by the capitalists with their bags of gold. This was hastily agreed to, for Mr. Ferguson as a communist was brilliant but unconvincing. Very good. Soon after 1915 began he waved a glad farewell to perfidious Albion, leaving us in the lurch, and was carried by the *Popayan* out of sight of the whole business. And there was a peculiar light in his eye as he remarked that if it hadn't been for him getting a smashed hand during a breakdown at sea—a hot crank pin—and having to stay behind at the company's hospital at Marajo, he'd never have come back into the war and met me, nor would he ever have met

Mrs. Ferguson. It was impossible to decide whether he regretted all these consequences of the smashed hand. The light in his eye was the sign of his vision of the alternatives. That was Ferguson's highly characteristic talent. He was a true romantic, extracting his joy from an uncanny perception of the hazards of existence, the possibilities that remain forever in the distant and hidden chambers of our less courageous souls. It was obvious, from the way he was regarding me, that he was contemplating a state of affairs in which he had never met me, and that he was wondering whether, under these circumstances, I should have existed at all.

And when he was better—arm in a sling—very weak from the heat, he took to wandering into the general store. I had never been to Marajo, eh? Don't go then, he added gratuitously. It was a very small place, where the cargo was stored when it could not be transshipped direct to the river boat and taken up to Manaos and way ports—a clearing on the edge of the jungle. Mr. Ferguson on the subject of the jungle was a revelation. It had excited him, the idea of white people living on that foothold between river and wilderness, the trees standing a little nearer and a little nearer all the time, unless you went out and attacked them with weapons. It had evidently got in under the hide of his egoism. There was a look of alarm on his remarkable high-boned face and in his pale eyes as he told, in a clear, uncultured, reverberating baritone, of that little colony. A jetty with rails into the warehouse, a track, continually overrun with tall grass, leading to a short dirt road where you found the store, a shop kept by a Chinaman, another shop where the natives bought whatever it is natives buy, and then that infernal high grass again and a vista of what Mr. Ferguson called kennels on sticks, native huts standing above the watery mud of the bank. All this, I was to

understand, backed by enormous trees laced with lianas, and the idea he had carried away was that the place was hanging on by its eyelashes, as it were. The big trees were like the vanguard of an army standing its ground and, as soon as a weak point showed, it would be upon them.

They showed it too, the people who lived there. No, not the natives. Nor the Chinks, either.

No, the people he meant were the storekeeper and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Johanning. There was a faint inflection of solemnity in his voice as he mentioned them, so that I became alert. To lose, even for a moment, the attitude of sardonic amusement that tipped his tongue with the light flame of malice was unusual for Mr. Ferguson. I began to concentrate upon Mr. and Mrs. Johanning. They came out of the blue clouds of cigarette smoke as a forlorn pair of blond Scandinavians, wilting in the heat of the Amazonian Delta. And their background, double-screened with copper gauze, was a home very like those you can find in South Shields and Cardiff, Liverpool, and the wee ports of Fifeshire, where Scandinavians have settled to ply their inevitable trade of sutlers and ship chandlers. That was one source of Mr. Ferguson's respect. They had carpets even on the wide veranda that ran round the house, and in the parlour they had furniture of dark green plush, and a buffet with bevelled glass. They had hassocks and whatnots, and grasses, dyed red, in blue cloisonné vases. They had a glass sphere full of coloured sand and a model of Cleopatra's Needle made of white marble. They had a stereoscope and a cabinet of double photographic views of Welsh watering places. They had a basket of fruit made of glass. They had a ship in a bottle.

And it became apparent that there was more than mere casual propinquity growing up between the storekeeper and his wife and the large shambling creature with his

amputated finger in a sling. They had, in fact, come into his life at the moment when their genius for home-making in unfavourable circumstances would most appeal to Mr. Ferguson's undernourished heart. The unprofitable nature of his own vagabond existence came upon him in full force as he was made much of amid the dark green plush and the red grasses in blue cloisonné vases. The profound humility of the wandering seaman swept over him and suffused his mind with unusual tender imaginings. He used the word "nest," and it had a strange sound coming from his lips, as though a roving dragon should express a desire for a villa in a thriving suburb. One had visions of an eagle in a canary's cage. And there was a horsehair sofa on the veranda upon which he used to sit talking to Mrs. Johanning in a low tone of respectful admiration, for she had created this little paradise, on the very edge of the jungle, singlehanded. It was she who defied the great trumpet-lipped orchids of the dark jungle behind her, she who slashed at the lianas dropping from the trees and made them leave her geraniums alone. Not that the flowers she had sent out from England lasted very long, but it was the spirit of the pale-eyed little woman he admired. The cat would hop on the horsehair sofa between them, and he would stroke it domestically while Mrs. Johanning talked—of a nest.

A woman like Mrs. Johanning might talk in a number of ways. She might be a mere empty fool or she might use Mr. Ferguson's longing for a nest to gratify her own craving for excitement. Nothing like this occurred, however. She accepted her guest's approval and compliments with decorous delight and asked him if he were not the partner of some thrifty paragon. And Mr. Ferguson's retort to that was an allusion to sisters. Had she any sisters? was the spirited interrogation.

And so, bearing in mind the conventionality of the question, one can imagine how the reply of the lady gave a new turn to Mr. Ferguson's thought. For she said, in a tone of cantankerous sincerity, that she had one, and she wished she were married.

Mr. Ferguson laughed, at this point in the conversation, he informed me. The idea of settling the matter offhand like that amused him. So to keep the ball on the bounce, as he said, he remarked:

"All right, Mrs. Johanning. Let's have a look at her."

Mrs. Johanning put down her darning and rose to go into the house. "I'll show you," she said.

This was more than he bargained for. He stared after her open-mouthed. It ran through his mind that Mrs. Johanning had an unmarried sister locked up in a cupboard somewhere upstairs and was going to take her out, dust her off, as it were, and bring her down for inspection. The way she spoke gave him that impression. It was while Mrs. Johanning was indoors that he heard the rattle of an anchor being let go, with the quick fluttery boom of propellers going astern, and then the peremptory smacking sound of a motor boat's exhaust.

He turned and looked out across the broad reach of the channel, now shining like a sheet of polished zinc in the neutral light of a sun descending behind the forest and the clouds of a distant storm. A river steamer, the *Ailsa Craig*, had come down from one of her regular trips. He could see the skipper leaning over the bridge rail and the mate's body bowed over the forecastle head, waiting to see her take up. Mr. Ferguson, being a seaman, was watching these manœuvres with professional interest and the faint animosity of an engineer toward the trivial occupations of the men on deck when Mrs. Johanning returned with a large photograph.

This was, I believe, one of the vital moments in Mr. Ferguson's career, but his instinct was to conceal its importance by emphasizing the arrival of what he called "those two fellers from the plantations." It was they who arrived in the motor boat from the *Ailsa Craig*. He heard their quick decisive tread on the timber jetty, *clomp-clomp-clomp*, in step all the way, with a sudden occasional scuffle of a foot, which was the short one getting into the long one's stride again. He noticed that, he said, even with the photograph in his hand.

It must be confessed that he did not, even when he became aware of their formidable character and profession, take "those two fellers from the plantations" very seriously. There was something about Mr. Ferguson's mind which made it impossible to impress him with the trappings and traditions of organized power. The necessary decorum of official life aroused in his breast a primitive resistance. The secret of the Johannings, suddenly capturing his imagination and affection, was their fundamental simplicity of mind, their freedom from any taint whatever of what he called "popinjay business." There was, he assured me, no fancy airs about them. But toward Mr. Rieder, the tall planter, and his brother, Mr. Gustaf Rieder, the short gentleman making a stay in the country at his brother's place, he conceived an instant suspicion that they were gentry and consequently "popinjays."

Their appearance was against them, it seems. Mr. Johanning and himself wore no coats in that awful humid heat, and had their neckbands turned in and their sleeves rolled up, Mr. Ferguson's game hand being suspended in a mere loop of tape instead of one of those fancy silk scarfs. Mrs. Johanning "wore any old thing." But these two sudden arrivals from the plantations were attired in spotlessly laundered white drill trousers and tunics. Their

helmets were scientifically constructed for the circulation of air. So Mr. Ferguson put it, adding with a dry grin that so were their vocal organs. To him there was something offensive in two men suddenly scooting out of the jungle dressed in clothes that still showed the gloss and creasing of the iron. Even their shirt cuffs were stiff and white. That sort of thing, Mr. Ferguson said, would be all right here, and he flung out an arm to indicate the whole shining life of the Prado, the whirr of motor car, the clink of glasses, the rattle of dice, the flash and glare of the theatres that clustered round the great opera house in the Plaza. I became aware of the emotions that lay behind this man's apparent vagabondage, emotions which explained the paradox of his roving body and contemptuous mind. For just as that body could never be at ease save in loose and homely clothing, so his mind was that of a sharp peasant, flinching from the discipline and vanities of prosperity and progress, an unconscious enemy of the arts and sciences, suspicious even of public honour and the arrogance of wealth.

"Nobody patronizes me," he burst out after a silence, and with apparent irrelevance.

"Did they?" I asked, startled.

"Did they!" Mr. Ferguson leaned sideways over the table in order to reach his boot, where he struck a match. He compressed his lips, and then the scorn faded rapidly out of his eyes while he raised the burning match. It was as though the impersonal triangular flame had revealed something behind the opaque fog of racial prejudices which clouded his mind.

"Did they!" he repeated. "You think I'm cranky, that's what it is," he remarked tolerantly. He put his arms on the table and became eloquent and quotable.

"There was me," he said, "just at that very minute been

shown the portrait of the future Mrs. Ferguson. And instead of holding back when they see Mrs. Johanning and meself engaged in what you call confidential conversation, they barge right in. Never even took their damn pith hats off at first. 'Oh, and how are you, Mrs. Johanning?' And old Johanning, he comes in then, very quiet and worried, as he always was, his braces hanging down over his thighs. And how is he? And who's this? looking at me. And how am I? And first one, then the other, talks fast and loud and laughs. All the time walking back and forrard on the veranda, shooting their feet out straight and coming down on their rubber heels, heads down, hands behind their backs, very spry, very much amused. One—the tall one—picks up the portrait—almost takes it out of my hand. I tell you, they were a disturbance! I was that mad I could have taken them by the necks and run them down to the jetty into the water. Never a by your leave! And they got no great welcome from anybody. Didn't seem to notice it. What could I do? Presently Johanning he goes out into the store and they follow him, one on each side, slapping his back, laughing like old billyho, leaving me standing there like a fool, the portrait in me hand and not a word to say to Mrs. Johanning."

And presently, out of a series of irrelevant and ironical comments and asides upon the peculiarities of destiny, what with him smashing his hand, and so running up against that portrait, which didn't do her any kind of justice, there came something a stranger could lay hold of. In the first place, Mrs. Johanning, a very light blonde with light blue eyes and pale hair drawn back into a bun, revealed her ignorance of the two men from the plantations. She doubted if even her husband knew much. She was taciturn and surly about it, evidently under the stress of

some secret uneasiness born of the power they had over Johanning. Good customers. Paid always in English gold. Had to be civil to Mr. Rieder, by whom she meant the tall one. The other had begun to come with him about a month before. He seemed to have the money, too. Anybody could see she didn't like either of them, because it transpired she thought they were crazy. Touched. Highly educated, and rich and valuable customers, but touched. Johanning? That was just the trouble. He had told her, more than once, when she said a quiet word of warning, to hold her noise. You couldn't imagine a more absurd expression to use toward her, so quiet and such good company. But Johanning, worrying his soul out in the big untidy store, his shirt all perspiration, and his suspenders always hanging useless round his thighs, his hand always on the point of taking a pencil from behind his ear and never seeming to manage it, used to get snappish if spoken to. His employers seemed paralyzed by the risks and the opportunities of the war. They seemed to be under the impression that they were about to be ruined and at the same time convinced that they ought to make all the money in the world. Johanning was poor company. If they fired him he would never get to Denmark alive, and in any case the home they had so painfully built up on the edge of the jungle would go. So Mrs. Johanning appreciated having Mr. Ferguson about to talk to.

She talked to him about her sister, of course, who it seems was coming out to join them. It was lonesome for her with practically no white women within call. Coming out in one of the company's ships, the *Bucaramanga.*

I suppose I must have signified in some way that I was listening intelligently. Perhaps I muttered "ah!" or some other such remark. Mr. Ferguson looked at me askance.

"You wait," he said, and looked out at the incredible blue night of Havana.

"Think of her coming all that way in a ship by herself," he remarked absently. I resented this. My own ship carried solitary young ladies to and fro and delivered them in perfect condition at the end of the voyage. I said so.

"Ah, maybe. But her, you see! She draws them. Without giving any of them a thought she draws them. They would be like flies round a lamp, if you understand what I mean. Couldn't keep away. But she's safe now."

This was gratifying. He became absorbed in the risks girls run in travelling about the world. So many doubtful characters, popinjays, on the prowl. This was a new Ferguson. His manifestations during our voyages together had given no hint of such sentiments; at that time he dealt exclusively in general terms with a world of men. Women had not even been abstractions with him. The picturesque impressions of himself had always been those of a sort of wandering celibate, a monastic pilgrim beset by capitalistic paynims.

Yes, safe! They were all together at last in a home of their own. True, he himself was compelled to come into Havana on occasion, purely on business, and was glad enough to get back to the big grapefruit farm which he and the Johannings, with a few of these here dagoes, worked. No more sea for him! Well, this was how it went.

He glanced at me sharply, as if he actually saw the idea darting through my mind, the second key of his complex adventure.

"Go on," I said. "I'm waiting."

"Wonderful!" he muttered dreamily. "And she never gave them a thought. A queen!"

"Was she dark?" I asked, having no image of a queen in my mind.

"Dark?" he repeated. "No. She was auburn, dark auburn if you like. She had that hot red hair which queens used to have in the olden times."

"Go on," I said again. "Where did you go aboard the *Bucaramanga?*"

"In midocean!" he cried suddenly, staring at me as in a trance. "And her the one looking over the side as I climbed the ladder!" He sank again into a meditation of the whirl of the city's night life. He would have no more to drink, and by common consent we walked out again to the sea wall. We sat down on the wide coping, while below a swell burst musically among the black rocks, the dazzling white foam showing them up with sinister distinctness, like the bared teeth of an assassin. Across the way the grind and roar of mechanical amusements sounded from the park where wheels of lights, horizontal and vertical, turned to the music of steam organs and squeals of delight from unsatiated pleasure seekers. The great lantern threw a rhythmical beam of light upon this scene of flashy noise, as though returning with a mild, lambent curiosity to discover what exactly the participants were doing.

"And how," I asked mildly, stripping the black and gold band from another Magnifico, "did you manage that?"

"Well, it was curiosity," said Mr. Ferguson, nursing his leg. "When my hand got better and the man I was supposed to relieve discovered he didn't want to join up, I was to wait for the *Bucaramanga*, and waiting for the *Bucaramanga* left me with nothing to do but talk to Mrs. Johanning about her sister, who was coming out. I tell you, she was worried about her. Anybody would be."

I had the key to this now. It was an integral part of his preoccupation with the singular ménage he found on the banks of the Amazon, up a backwater of the great delta-

island of Marajo. It was part of his inherited peasant passion for the furniture in dark-green plush, the hassocks, the sphere of coloured sand, the model of Cleopatra's Needle, the stereoscope, the basket of fruit made of glass, the ship in a bottle. He had also the tendency to secrete valuables, including women, and a reluctance to expose them to common gaze.

"Not only about how she was going on aboard ship, but what would happen when she got out, with those two coming down in their motor boat once or twice a week. See?"

"And you gone home," I said.

"Just that. Me gone home. I got so I couldn't sleep, thinking about it."

And it appeared that Mrs. Johanning, while claiming no great mental alertness, had something of the unconscious artist in her, for as the days went by, with touch after touch to the portrait, hint by hint, trait following trait, Mr. Ferguson saw the girl with the cream-white skin and dark auburn hair step out of the frame. He said he saw her among the trees at the back; Mrs. Johanning had plenty of time. The *Bucaramanga* wasn't due for a fortnight. It got so he thought he must have met and known the girl. "Even her voice!" a deep contralto, with a sibilant lisp like a stream issuing in laughter from a hollow cavern. Oh, most musical! And quite true, as he found later. It seemed to me that Johanning woman was no fool. She went about her housework in her astonishing home and in the humid heat, all the while creating a masterpiece. A sister worth having. And a sister-in-law. Wise and thrifty. Could make anything. Everything in the place nearly she had made with her own two hands: covers, tea-cozy, antimacassars, cushions—and anxious to teach her young sister and make a model wife of her.

He would have been entirely satisfied with the situation

but for those two who would come down the river without warning, to break in upon the quiet of the house with their maddening and patronizing peculiarities, loading the boat to the guards with huge quantities of stores, from drums of red lead to cases of canned milk and champagne. There was a trick in the way they played upon his mind until he "didn't know if he was on his head or his heels." In the first place, they had apparently abnormal hearing. Even a whisper, while they were outside the door, brought them into the secret with a whoop. They were intelligent, those brothers Rieder, Gustaf and Max, and they were intelligent in a malevolent way. The Johannings were a joke, ho-ho! Mr. Ferguson was a joke, ha-ha! As for the sister, Lotta, coming out on the *Bucaramanga,* she was a perfectly marvellous joke, he-he! Nobody could get the essence of it or discover just what made the rest of the world so funny to the Rieders. They just caught each other's eye, showed their teeth in the centre of their close-trimmed pointed beards, and became consumed with mirth. The impression they conveyed was that they slid down the river, as down a rope, from a higher plane of intelligence, to have a look at the comical creatures crawling about below. Mr. Ferguson conceived a violent desire to bash their heads together, simply because they behaved as though such a thing were inconceivable. The tall one would look down and the short one would look up, and they would nod, grin, slap their thighs, and yell with laughter. And even after Mrs. Johanning, who ignored them, had placidly changed the subject, they would be the victims of recurrent hiccoughs and reminiscent gusts of giggling. And Mr. Ferguson, half out of his mind one evening, bursting out, "What's the matter with you two fellows?" they appalled him by talking rapidly and seriously to each other in their own language.

The fruit of that was his decision to go up the river. When he told Johanning of his intention the latter said, "Dere's nodding dere."

"There's a plantation, eh?" said Mr. Ferguson.

And Johanning, admitting the existence of a plantation forty, fifty miles up, wished to know the use or sense of going all that way to look at a lot of bananas. Mr. Ferguson at once commented on the folly of coming down so often in a motor boat. The answer to this was no water above where the *Ailsa Craig* took off.

"And I ain't got de gasoline to spáre," said Johanning.

But Mr. Ferguson, his imagination exacerbated by the behaviour of the two wealthy patrons, turned his attention to a canoe. There were a number of these hollow logs floating just beyond the clearing, and he made his preparations to take a trip.

"I don't suppose they're any different to what Adam and Eve used," he remarked.

"I know," I said. "I've seen them. Did anybody go with you?"

"Oh, I started in style," he confessed. "The owner and his son came as crew. But they wouldn't go beyond some place about twenty miles away, where their family lived, I believe. The old feller—you couldn't call him a man—was half Indian, half nigger, and all I could make out was they were finished—I could do what I liked. You see," admitted Mr. Ferguson, "they knew the canoe couldn't sink, whether I did or not, and they could always find it. So there was I, with a basket of sandwiches and beer and a mosquito bar, left to do what I liked."

The river was wider there than at Johanning's place. It was a backwater. Streams flowed into one another—"rivers running through the river," Mr. Ferguson called them.

He found the wide water turning eastward, to his surprise, for he imagined the river came from the west.

"As a matter of fact," he observed, "I got a scare when I tasted the water and found it salty. I had water, but it seemed to me I didn't know so very much about the lay of the land. The trees stood in the water. As they rotted they fell in, and then the mud began to collect and made a point which threw the current 'way over to the other shore and brought down more trees there. Very different from the Old Country," said Mr. Ferguson.

"But how did you expect to get back?" I asked with some curiosity. "Those canoes need more than one man."

"I could get a ride in their motor boat, I guess," he muttered.

"And did you?"

"Yes," he returned, laughing. "I did. But not back. It was late in the afternoon when I saw them coming down, not in their usual small launch, but in a big one. It was going a good eighteen knots, and I've never seen such a thing in my life. Round the bend they came, a great riffle of white water spreading out on each side, a hump-backed wake behind them as high as the counter. There was a long house amidships, and on this house these two sat side by side in deck chairs, facing forward. Like on a platform. Skimming along in the air like two white birds, one long, the other short, smoking cigars, legs crossed, nigger steering in the house below. I'd never seen anything like it before.

"And they roared with laughter when they saw who it was in the canoe. Why did I wave, you say? Who wouldn't afloat on a horrible great river that got wider the farther I went? Hand went up by instinct. Would have hailed Old Nick up there. And all they did was to tear past, sitting sideways on their dack chairs, looking through prism

binoculars looped from their infernal necks like bibs. All fitted out for inspecting passing jokes! And snored away round the bend to where I'd left my crew."

It seems he had a sail, and it drew him along very slowly. The sun went down behind the enormous mass of foliage, and he began to think of turning back. Nothing to see, after all. Yet he liked the slow movement through the water, and the silence. The chances are he was enjoying the opportunity to meditate, amid scenes of abstract grandeur and simplicity, about Lotta. It is possible, though he said nothing of it. A name like Lotta, it may be surmised, would evoke images of a delicately sensuous appeal. Some names, of women especially, carry in their cadence an adumbration of allurement, of passion, of surrender, in their owners. I could see him easily enough in that setting, a lonely waste of flowing water canopied by trees and sky, his battle-scarred features relaxing, as they were now, with thoughts of the gracious future, the victim of a peasant's dream of domestic felicity.

But this would soon give way to a more urgent sense of insecurity. He admitted he was reluctant to lower the sail, but it was necessary to go back. He began to drift. It occurred to him he must keep a lookout in case those two came back and ran him down in the dark. Make a joke of it, no doubt, he reflected.

But the sound of exploding exhausts came from the other direction, about an hour later. He found himself the centre of a bright beam of intense white light, and he remembered with unpleasant accuracy a swollen corpse of a cow close by, an obscene rotundity that wavered toward the canoe as though seeking companionship. And then a hail, the shutting off of a searchlight, and harsh voices talking.

It was a motor boat, extremely smart in lines and finish, and full, as Mr. Ferguson put it, of squareheads. He

climbed in among a crowd of spotlessly attired young gentlemen, and his back was up at once. Naval officers in white uniforms!

"No!" I murmured.

"That's what they were," he asserted, looking me in the eye, "and they were going to a dance. I know because they took me along and—well, no need to go into that. I'm off the hard liquor now.

"And the Rieders were there. First thing I saw when we pulled up at the landing stage about a mile up a narrow branch of the river, was the boat with the two deck chairs on the roof. It was a very big hacienda. They had electric light and ice cream, two things you don't associate with the jungle. The old fellow who owned it had a long white beard. There were seidels and pipes and swords over the mantels. You know all about those things. But those two laughing hyenas were people of importance in that house. They told everybody about me floating on the river in a canoe, and everybody was very much amused. I tell you I don't remember what happened very clearly except that there was plenty of refreshment. When I woke up next morning I was on the *Lotta*."

"The what?" I said, startled.

"Don't you remember the *Lotta?* I know she changed her name, but that was what she was called. Only a coincidence, I may tell you. She wasn't named after Mrs. Ferguson," he added with a slight smile as a concession. "Do you remember a man named Ludwig Ditmars of Bremen? He had a fleet of ships all over the east coast of Africa. *Öst-Afrika Linie*. Well, this was his prize baby, the *Lotta Ditmars*, named after his young wife. They called her just the *Lotta*. There was a big picture of the lady, an oil painting in a fine gold frame, in the saloon, which was the wardroom. She was a queen, too. One of

these black-haired German women with big dark eyes like an Italian duchess. But they're German, all right. Old Ditmars shot himself after she died, and the whole business collapsed.

"The *Lotta*, I may tell you," he continued, for I was digesting this unexpected information, "was lying snug as a bug in a rug, in a branch of the delta, about fifteen miles from deep water, and she was undergoing what you might call internal changes. When a ship comes out of the Baltic as a Swedish ore carrier, there is plenty to do to convert her into a cruiser. The ore lay on the river bank, tons of red mud and rock. Underneath they had stowed the armament in cases. They had been there up that creek for two months, working like beavers. They had tents and shacks up in a clearing—even had a tin chapel."

"And who was Rieder, or the Rieders?"

"Oh, the long one was a planter all right, only he might claim to have an engineering plant as well, and the little one, the one I had most to do with, was an officer on the *Lotta*. Then I understood his jokes at the Johannings when he joshed me about 'his little Lotta' and how he loved Lotta, looking at Mrs. Ferguson's portrait with his hand on his heart, the short-shafted little slob! But he was out of his mind even then."

"What do you mean, out of his mind?" I asked.

"Just what I say. Unhinged. Tile loose. Slipping a cog in his gear-box. He was a monomaniac."

Mr. Ferguson was one of those men who have gone so much about the world that they have a sort of supernumerary vocabulary. Having learned the words empirically, they enunciate them with vigour and precision, and forget them until the urgent occasion again arises. So I was not surprised at his use of the word "monomaniac" so much as at the positive tone. So I murmured:

"Oh, was he?" and he retorted once again, "You wait!"

"Yes," he went on, "the little runt was an officer on the *Lotta*. An *Oberleutnant*. Do you know what made me want to kill him sometimes? Not his laugh nor his silly sly way of talking about his *Lotta* and my Lotta, but a habit he had of standing square in front of me, his feet planted flat on the deck, his face close to mine. When I turned a little, to ease off the proximity, as you might say, he shifted round accordingly. He talked too much. He talked about things I didn't understand, nor him either. Things you see in books and high-class magazines. He'd spend a whole morning gabbling at me. I never did like hair on a man's face, and his red wet lips and short pointed chin-beard got on my nerves."

"Do you mean to say," I demanded. "that you went out with them?"

"Of course, I meant to say it," returned Mr. Ferguson. "How could I help myself? I wasn't sure I hadn't died and crossed the bar before noon that day. What they'd have done if I had tried to get away would have been plenty. Figure it out yourself. Me with a game fist, a head as big as a waste-paper basket, and a mouth like the bottom of a bird cage! Did I go out with them? I say I did. And apart from the general state of unfitness, as you might say, that I was in, I had a reason. I was ready to quit. Me, I was sick of the sight of myself. A rolling stone I was, and I wanted to roll out of sight."

"Surely not," I protested, "at a time like that."

"Yes, I did. It was the time like that, as you call it, that made me want to quit. If you don't know what I mean, you're thicker than I take you for."

With a sudden movement Mr. Ferguson swung his legs over the parapet and extended himself to look at a slender moon hanging like a barbaric jewel on the bosom of the

night. The white foam below boiled in a subdued sibilant cadence that was the perfect accompaniment of sentimental confessions. His weight sustained by an elbow, Mr. Ferguson in his own fashion strove to convey to me the complexity of his emotions. They were obvious enough to me, however. He, the temperamental rebel, for all his peasant ancestry, had suddenly reared and bolted when the corral gate swung wide in front of him. Like all of us, he regarded the ocean as the supreme refuge from grief and care, the impregnable fortress where we are safe from sirens, for example, who haunt the rocky shores. And, apparently, he had been defeated. He had gone out, and by a very unusual set of circumstances he was confronted by the very problem he had fled. What he wanted me to comprehend was his state of mind when he went away on the *Lotta* to an unknown destination. He was struggling with a combination of alcoholic remorse, shame, and the unreasoning joy of the true romantic when he sees the shores falling away on either side, the upward lift of the forecastle head to the sky, the wind caressing his hair, his imagination glowing with thoughts of the delicious adventures awaiting him below the horizon and implicit in the sly-winking lights of a distant harbour. I knew all this, and he knew I knew it, and so we sat for a spell, in silence, on the Malecón, rather alarmed, both of us, that we had left that sort of thing behind us. Such was the true symbolism of this particular moment—we sat there looking at ourselves from a new and not very fascinating angle. We saw that no matter how silken the bonds, they were strong about our hearts, and we couldn't go roving any more!

These reflections bridge the incoherent gap in his narrative. A perfectly natural reluctance to dwell upon the paraphernalia of the war caused him to skip the evolution of a dirty-looking cargo boat up a tropical river into an

engine of destruction. Indeed, he could have seen but little save perhaps a gun, or small details his technical eye told him concealed armament. It was only when, about a week later, afloat in the winged blue of the South Atlantic, he heard the bang of a six-pounder and scrambled to his port-hole to see the *Bucaramanga* swing into view, her safety valves blowing and giving out a white line of vapour with a hoarse throaty roaring, her signal halyards agitated as they were hauled up and down, her hull rising and falling in exquisite rhythm with the great peace of the sea's bosom. I could see the head of him protruding, like a harsh reddish cameo in a brazen ring, the light catching the high ridge of his nose, his lips drawn back and his brows puckered in thought. Overhead strong voices gave orders; he heard a knocking and the whirr of metal in grooves. The *Bucaramanga* came on at half speed, her wake forming and dying away, as though she were bewildered. As well she might be, when a shabby freighter fired a gun across her course and signalled that she must stop and surrender. Even then, and for months after the first successful forays of those enemy craft, the mind of the merchantman refused to accept the reality of their achievement. They might hold up others but not him! It was a bad joke—full ahead! And the heavy shells exploding at the water line, the cutter full of sinister armed men, the spectacle of the commander submitting as a prisoner, all this was needed to bring the truth to the seaman and set his heart on fire.

With Mr. Ferguson it was not quite like that. He was a true romantic, and the episode, at the moment of its culmination, presented itself to him in the guise of an incredible folly. The one comfort and resource of the romantic is his inalienable vagabondage. He claims the right to set off upon his eternal pilgrimage at a moment's notice. Mr. Ferguson was fleeing from the dreams of felicity enshrined

in the image of Lotta, evoked by the competent Mrs. Johanning. And here, looking down upon him as he accompanied the boarding party to the *Bucaramanga's* side was Lotta, in the Second Cabin, a frightened, wide-eyed creature with a huge mop of warm auburn hair. The prevailing emotion in his heart was anger at the trick. For in his simplicity he saw no way out of it now. He was a stricken man. There is no doubt in his mind he had no choice but to save the ship and receive Lotta as his reward. He was not entirely aware of it, but he had been reared in that romantical tradition.

"And what could I do?" he demanded of me on the Malecón. "I was a prisoner, practically; that's why I was carried over with that little feller Rieder when he went to take command. That's what he did. You could see him swelling while you looked at him. I told you he was a madman. I got the idea while we went over in the launch. He sat there in the stern, the rest of us about him. I was amidships, looking aft, facing him. He would look round at the others, his eyes getting bigger and bigger, his mouth with the lips splayed out and the point of his beard working. He would look suddenly at some one and scowl, gradually raising his chin until he was looking along his nose. All sorts of lunatic business.

"He was sane enough on the ship, however. He told the captain he was a prisoner and must be locked in his room. Fancy a big buck skipper getting that sort of information! Rieder ordered all the passengers in the saloon and made a speech. One move and they would be shot. He was in command. As for the crew, the first attempt they made to resist he would blow her up and sink her with all hands. If all went well, they would come to no harm."

"I remember now," I said. "And Lotta?"

"I found out who she was later, understand, and then

I remembered her looking down at us when we came alongside. It was when I told her I knew her sister at Marajo that she looked at me."

Here was simplicity. It was like Mr. Ferguson to have his idyll in romantic surroundings. Boarding a ship in mid-ocean, under piratical conditions, he announces himself as a friend of the family. One can surmise only vaguely the reaction of the girl's mind to this astonishing apparition coming up the side of the *Bucaramanga.*

"And she believed you?" I asked.

"I put it so she should," he replied.

I regarded Mr. Ferguson with admiration. In half a dozen words he had compressed the gist of most romantic stories. He put it so she should believe the incredible.

It must not be supposed he was a very desirable spectacle when he first presented himself. He must have been the exact opposite of her girlish dreams of a knight in shining armour. And in addition he was moody and severe, because he had got into that curious condition of mind already mentioned, which made him want to rescue her and abandon her at the same time.

She looked at him. It was a fruitful field for the imagination, thinking out what her expression must have been when she looked at him. Because, take it how you will, there was a touch of the miraculous about Ferguson in his tritest moments. He had that air of having only just alighted upon this planet. Add to this his appearance at such a time, picture the piteous plight of a girl whose comprehension of the war must have been simply chaos, and you approach a little nearer to the truth.

But not much. Mr. Ferguson's memories of what went on in the *Bucaramanga* were obscured by his preoccupation with his own emotions. He made shadowy allusions to strange episodes; to the captain's astute and secret com-

munications to the forces below, who appeared to be resourceful souls, to judge by their disposal of surplus fuel overside under the very eyes of the stolid sentries. But to him there was but one centre of interest on board, and I was invited to observe the growth of a fantastic attachment blooming like a flower on a battlefield: the attachment of a peasant for a peasant amid the colliding animosities of men and women whose personalities were temporarily merged in their tribal feuds. And the beauty of it was that because of those animosities Mr. Ferguson's preoccupation was unnoticed save by a stewardess, who approved when she heard that part of the story which had to do with Marajo. And here again the sophisticated listener was compelled to marvel at the mentality of a man who could contrive so romantic a love affair and yet maintain all the proprieties. It was startling to realize that Mr. Ferguson would stipulate for the proprieties in such a matter at the cost of battle, murder, and sudden death. For such as he, illiterate romantics, the proprieties are the guarantees of passion and fidelity. Without them his soul is not bound, but free, and the episode sinks to the ooze at the bottom of the sea of life. You could see Mr. Ferguson insisting upon that stewardess guarding the girl like an ogress. Indeed, only a little imagination was needed to see him opposed to the war for a more profound reason than mere political squeamishness. For the war seems to have liberated all those aspirations and dark whimsies which had only been suspected in the hearts of men and women, and which the peasant mind regards with fear and dislike. This came out as he descanted upon the seclusion of Lotta from prying eyes. Nowadays, he observed, look at them. Making up their faces in public, using lipsticks, going about alone, even expressing opinions! This was interesting. It turned out to be a close-up view of a primitive instinct, like that of a dog hiding a bone, or a tiger spring-

ing into the labyrinth with the lamb in his jaws. He gave me the idea that if his wife had been with him in Havana he would have concealed her existence from me. I taxed him with this, and he turned on me, swinging his legs to the street again, his back to the tender beauty of the night. And what did I expect? Would I blame him? Would I?

And he began a rapidly muttered tirade of what he'd been through. When they got to New York, as they did eventually in the *Bucaramanga,* because the fuel was giving out and that madman Rieder had nowhere to go with the Atlantic swept clean of colliers after the Falklands battle, when they got there, being a Britisher, he had to go home. Lotta was sent south with all the other passengers, and there you were. Could I understand what that meant to him, seeing her packed with the rest of them into a neutral ship, like cattle, and sent out to what might be their death? Did I know now why he didn't care a whoop for me and my ship and for the whole British navy? Ooh-oh! Think of it! Not a word, not a line for a year or more, they not being writing people, and letters being sunk when he sent them! Wasn't it a miracle that after it all, after so great a casualty, so narrow a chance, he had got her? Was he to be blamed for guarding what had cost him so much? A girl in a million! And he had her safe!

He had, too, it appeared. He sat on the wall, his knees wide, his chin sunk on his breast, his pale eyes regarding the flashing lights of the Prado with contempt, as though they represented for him the vanities and pomps of the world. There was in his eyes no consciousness of virtue, but rather a surly complacency that he had achieved the ownership of something exquisitely precious, something he had enshrined on a distant hacienda, amid the immemorial garnitures of his race. She was safe out there, almost under lock and key. I had that gleam of illumination at the last, of a girl

imprisoned in proprieties, along with the furniture of dark green plush, a buffet with bevelled glass, red grasses in blue cloisonné vases, a model of Cleopatra's Needle, a stereoscope, a basket of glass fruit, hassocks and antimacassars, and a ship—a ship in a bottle.

DECKERS ON THE COAST

I

DOWN on the after deck, shielded from sun and rain and the idle stare of the promenade, they were spread in a sprawling heap on Number Three hatch. Sixty, counting the children, as the ship left Colón. Nine hours later, what with the motion of the vessel and money troubles, the great Negress in the purple kimono set up a roaring, and she was got out of the crowd somehow; and then there were sixty-one.

In that congested microcosm, however, this was no more than an ephemeral inconvenience. It was more or less perplexing to a spectator how so many of them, with their diversities of sleeping paraphernalia, had contrived to embed themselves in a species of human mosaic upon a thirty by twenty-five hatch. Nevertheless, it was not adequate. They overflowed on all four sides, spilling from camp bedsteads set solidly athwart the gangways, snoring on bags of dunnage draped upon the winches (which were still hot, and caused occasional squeals as some small darky clutched the pipes and cylinders), and dispersing upon the bulwarks, where several were holding secret communication with the heaving waters.

As it grew dark, a huge wired bowl was suddenly turned on, and the assembled voyagers were flooded with yellow rays. It was easy to see that some of these people were accustomed to this method of travelling and had grown expert in dealing with the minor problems of existence in such circumstances. There was a girl, for instance, on the port side, who had brought her own narrow iron bed, with

sheets, and who revealed the skill of a quick-change artist in divesting herself of her shore finery and appearing, as if by magic, in a scarlet peignoir, her hair cascading over brown shoulders, and between her lips a cigarette offered by an appreciative saloon waiter, who, with one eye cocked to watch the long port alley for the second steward's approach, was laying the foundations of, let us hope, an enduring friendship.

There was the aged Negro, so grizzled that he seemed incredible and out of place save in an advertisement, who sat on a basket suitcase on the deck and read slowly, and with devastating enunciation, from the Old Testament.

There was the perennial and solitary vagabond, in dire need of a shave, his feet thrust into soiled rope-soled canvas shoes, his head bound in a calico underskirt borrowed from a neighbour, already sound asleep.

Others were less easy. Again and again they rose from their chairs and beds and settled themselves in supposedly more comfortable attitudes. A mother, with her three, all on one strip of canvas and laid out as if for interment, was periodically aroused by her offspring in monotonous rotation. Fed, their dark little faces still moist from the suckling, they fell back and slept instantly, lying in utter and innocent nakedness like statues of polished chalcedony. A couple, man and woman, perplexing enough to the European unversed in the life of the Coast, fondled one another and chuckled at intervals at their own whispered remarks. Perplexing, since he was a heavy blond young man with a silky beard concealing a weak chin, while she was a vigorous and beautiful quadroon, the wedding ring conspicuous on her finger as she lolled in her chair, alert, intelligent, bright as a new penny when she levelled her gaze upon an appraising saloon waiter or scullion who meditated an advance. Less easy, these, since they were

just married, and the future in Calomar, whither he was bound as a clerk, was uncertain.

Beyond them, and engaged in rapid converse with some of the crew, stood a man of uncertain age. His cap was of some furry fabric spotted to resemble the skin of a leopard, and his soiled linen suit hung loosely upon him. His face was drawn into vertical lines, into harsh furrows, and the expression of his irascible and bloodshot eyes was that of a man engaged in secret warfare with Fate. At times he turned, and the light from the cargo-cluster illumined that ravaged countenance with dreadful fidelity. There was an air of excitement about him, too, since he talked with the rapidity and gestures of one who lacked time to complete his story; and he looked around into the glare of the light as if he saw some one in the distance, overtaking him.

And he had competitors: from the recumbent forms arose a murmurous cacophony of diverse organs. Children whimpered and squalled; four Negroes snarled and gabbled as they shot craps; a piratical creature strummed on a banjo and hummed; while on the starboard side a furious uproar raged around a gray-haired virago, fit model for the Eumenides herself, who was accusing a smiling youth of stealing a bottle of eau de cologne from her bag. This was the most popular show of the evening. The dame sat there on her bed, her chemise sliding from her incredible shoulders, her bony arms and jaws moving in a convulsive synchronism. Men stood over her, with folded arms, and watched every movement, as if she were some marvelous automaton they had wound up and set going. This impression, that she was not human, but a clockwork affair, gained force when, of a sudden, without warning, as she foamed and choked, and lunged toward her adversary to strike him down to death, some word spoken amid the din

made her stop and, collapsing upon her pallet, she shrieked with laughter. She seemed to have run down, her spring broken, her interior mechanism gone derelict.

But the man on the other side of the hatch took no notice of these distractions. He was driven by something more than a mere momentary gust of animal passion. His incessant watchfulness, as he turned his head again and again toward the light, reminded one of a wild animal devouring his prey in an alien jungle. Like a wild animal, too, he took no notice of the snapping jackals near him, or of the natural noises—the booming of the wind now rising, the rattle and flap of the awning, the sough and spit of the sea along the side. He held the three men in white jackets in subjection to his vibrating finger and swift impetuous speech. They made no sign, save to spit and flick ash from cigarettes, but they remained. Here was necromancy, since they knew the steward was already searching angrily for them. They remained. The dinner gong thrummed musically along the corridors as the bell-hop moved to and fro. They remained. The figure of the second steward, spick and span, shaven to pink perfection, emerged smartly from the port alley. They saw him and moved, yet dominated by the cadaverous being in his dirty linen suit, who was offering them, so to speak, the kingdoms of the world. And then the steward saw them, and they rushed into the starboard alley toward the kitchen, leaving the necromancer to sink down on a yellow leatherette suitcase and fumble in his pocket for a cigarette.

All his life he had been an imaginative man. There had come to him with the romantic tales of childhood, a shameful yet alluring conviction that he would be able to know those desperate doings in reality, be able to rip away the baffling veils hung between himself and the things he desired. There was a dark significance in the way he sat

there, his chin on his clenched hands, recalling the vivid moments of his life. He surveyed with stoical courage his boyhood dreams, which were always of material import—dreams of gold and silver, or slaves, and houses of barbaric solidity. What he wanted had always to die, and when it was dead he no longer wanted it. So, as he grew older, he thought more and more of wealth, hard minted bullion, never finding that mysterious idealism which is the key to the riches of the world. Now, on the eve of success, he was poor.

He looked back. The soilure of the deck at which he stared through his unwashed fingers became transmuted into a dark mirror, in which he saw his life in a series of episodes. Yet were they episodes? Were they not rather a series of sudden irretrievable crashes to lower levels of industrious resignation? For he had been industrious. He had been a clever boy at school, and the scholarship which had sent him to the university was easy to him. Yet it was the first stage in his unlucky career. He saw that now. It had started him up the rickety ladder of learning. While his real self, his imagination, was concerned with the things you could get hold of, money and its transmutations. That was the first drop, when he found himself a bookmaker's clerk at Newmarket, instead of student in cap and gown at Cambridge, a dozen miles away. He had not regretted the change at the time; he had defiantly enjoyed it, and it might have been his career. But the favourites won, day after day, and he had been forced to beg a ride to London.

He recalled all the succeeding years and saw no flaw in himself. Bad luck. He had asked no more than some of the wealth in the world, yet people got the habit of regarding him with contempt and disdain, as if he suffered from some moral lesion. And he was sometimes a little bitter with the gentry who preached that a man, to succeed,

should concentrate upon his ambition. Had he not done just that? Yet he had failed very badly indeed.

And it came to him, as he sat on his poor and inadequate valise, staring at the deck, that his struggle had been very much with simple circumstances and not with people. Neither he nor they had been evil. And also there was this fatal gift of his, of talking with terrible facility. Why was that? Always he had suffered from it. Give him a listener, and he was "away to the races," as they used to say at home. Even when he had got a business position, this gift of tongues, as one might say, was no asset. Once, when he had been admitted to an interview, and he was tearing along, thinking that he was doing finely, his client had shot half out of his chair thundering, "*Shut up!*" There had been a silence, a moment of paralysis, and then a mutter from the man: "What d' you think you're doing?—Drive a man crazy," and such-like comments.

Why was that? Never got anywhere, in spite of his education and fecundity of speech. Even this evening, when he confronted the ship's doctor in the surgery and was identified on the list of deck passengers, he had somehow launched into an uncalled-for loquacity, and had found the man, his eyeglass screwed into his experienced blue eye, examining him critically. And had there not been a faint sound like "*cacoëthes loquendi*" as he went out? The doctor thought himself safe, no doubt, in talking Latin to a decker. But had he really gabbler's itch?

He stared at the deck and wondered. Even as he did so, he found his lips forming the words that he had "no animus, no animus whatever." There it was—*cacoëthes loquendi*—gabbler's itch. He frowned. It was a grave disadvantage, this lack of animus. Because a simple fellow had no consideration in the world, if he talked. They shouted, "Shut

up!" or just stared and moved out of earshot. His wife, for example, had simply cleared out, left him for good. Of course he had failed to support her. Ah! but there was another side to that. He had never been successful with women. Nobody could hold it against him that he had done them any harm. It was true that he ought to have supported his wife. But he had a humorous conviction that she would have gone—anyway. Saw it in her eye, one day, while he was talking very fast.

There was something about him, he was well aware. He made a momentary comparison of himself with that doctor, for instance, with his finely wrinkled yet healthy-looking parchment skin, his alert poise, his superior monocled scrutiny. About the same age. Thirty years ago they might have been contemporaries at the same college. And he, the doctor, had never said a word beyond "What's your name?" and that valedictory mutter in Latin. Was that the difference? No. Something else, he felt quite sure.

He was apparently unaware of the turmoil surrounding him, the buzz and chatter that arise always from a huddled mass of humans, who are being carried, like cattle, to their desired havens, and who become garrulous and musical and quarrelsome, merely for lack of responsibility and employment. He did not notice how, in the course of ceaseless rearrangements of baggage and persons, he had become isolated. He sat now on his valise, on the deck, a solitary being, apart. The deck was now like a large chamber walled in by the wind. Above the great bowl of light which poured its rays diagonally upon them and threw immense black shadows into the after-gloom, the canvas awning seemed to be struggling to escape. It bellied out from the halyards in a concave vault of quivering fabric, and then suddenly descended and began to flap viciously

in the gusts that came over the bulwarks at intervals. Beyond those bulwarks were darkness and heaving waters, and a wind that gave out great booming sighs as it fled over the sea.

He looked up at last and found himself as if shunned. And his undisciplined imagination took it as an omen when a wave suddenly reared up over the bulwarks and fled aft, splashing him contemptuously with spray. Nobody touched but him! He shook the water from his eyes and stood up, glancing round to discover the witnesses of his misfortune. But the occupants of the hatch were preoccupied with the problem of existence. The eddying wind and the beating canvas were giving trouble. Children were crying, and the mothers, reared up from their beds, were looking about for more secluded quarters. Several had already moved stealthily aft and were lost among the crew.

The ship took a long careening roll, and the sea leapt out of the darkness, sparkled and gleamed in the light, and detonated upon the deck. Murmurs and cries mingled with the sough of the water through the scuppers. The forms of men, safe in the shelter of the alleys, were silhouetted against the far brightness of the kitchens, whence had come great crashes of falling metal. Above the straining canvas, the guy ropes hummed and tackle squeaked as it was flung about by the wind and the scend of the ship. As she drew out from the horns of the Dark Gulf, she began to wallow on the outer edge of a hurricane.

Yet the fact that no one had seen his discomfiture with that first wave was for him a source of satisfaction. His mind ran swiftly over the situation, as he edged in between two massive bollards under the lee of the bulkhead. He saw one of those to whom he had been confiding his plans peering out upon the deck as if looking for him, and wearing an expression of hard curiosity.

II

He drew back. He must think. His trouble was, of course, money. Money for an adequate boat and tackle. But for that he would not have mentioned a word to these supercilious beings who would be in Sovranilla for a few hours, and then gone, to Curaçoa, to Port-au-Prince, to Havana and New York. No! Much rather would he have depended upon the people he knew in Sovranilla. Perhaps it would have been better if he had never left it. And he would never have heard that conversation, carried on in growls behind the latticework where he sat smoking a cigarette after he had washed the dishes for Jovita's Chinese cook.

Jovita was the proprietress of the Love Nest Café for Officers, in a discreet back street in Colón. The café was upstairs over the street and was screened all round with romantic greenery trellised over painted lattice. Jovita's two daughters, as big as herself, were the sirens. They danced and looked ponderously languorous at young ensigns from Indiana and Ohio. But the growls came from maturer throats. Captains of ships, he reflected, smoking cautiously, and lowering his ear until it was on a level with the voices. The latticework had creaked as the owner of the growl leaned against it. Outside the Love Nest in the arcaded street the tropical rain was descending in wavering sheets. It poured like a momentary cataract over the corrugated iron roof of the kitchen. So the captains of ships replenished their glasses and growled on.

The word Sovranilla came out. One of the speakers grumbled that "they could do what they liked with it, once they got it to Sovranilla." And then "six hundred thousand dollars. Gold, in little barrels a strong boy could run off with!" The speaker became indignant. "And nowhere to put it but a cupboard on the boat deck, with a rotten old

ship's-lock on it. Of course,"—here the growl became very thick, and almost inaudible,—"nobody knowing it, just as safe, eh?" And, "What the eye don't see the heart don't grieve for"; and a reference to the "worries of life," followed by guttural laughter and contralto badinage from a daughter of Jovita.

The watcher looked critically at her through a crevice in the heavy foliage. That was not his weakness. It exasperated him, at times, that men should abandon realities for such ephemeral solace as women afforded. Yet they had their uses, he reflected. They were kind enough. At Sovranilla, when he was so utterly on the beach that he had but one pair of pants, a brown-skinned creature with soft black eyes and gentle voice had sewn industriously on his behalf. He had bought her a bottle of perfume when he won eleven dollars on the *comandante's* bird at the village cockpit. But for the idolater of tangible riches there was no lure in feminine softness. Indeed, he had this much feminine about him—and it may be some explanation—that he loved the things they loved: the glitter of gems, the seductive feel of amber and ivory, the smooth caresses of silk, and the satisfying solidity of coins. He experienced a sensation almost of vertigo as he imagined those "little barrels a strong boy could run off with." The cigarette burned his fingers sharply as he crouched with closed eyes by the latticework, listening to the syncopations of the phonograph.

And they were up there now, a hundred feet away from him, those little barrels. He snuggled down between the bollards and tried to visualize them—clean, solid little affairs, with fat scarlet seals, exquisitely portable even for "a strong boy." But with a mysterious lack of logic his mind would not be preoccupied with them. He discovered that his vividly imagined fortitude was undermined by a

desire to return to Sovranilla. Do what he would, he could not evade a secret conviction that he regretted his departure. Why had he left?

He drew hard on a cigarette as he recalled that unkempt coast town that sprawled along the crumbling edge of a shabby bluff. He liked it. There was no appearance to keep up. The streets were lanes of mud or dust, with steep gullies cut here and there athwart them; and pigs and fowls wandered in and out of the houses. He liked it. They were kind to him. Always, when he had been in low water, there was a meal somewhere for him. He could always get a canoe and paddle round to a sheltered cove for an afternoon's swimming. And the brown-skinned girl liked him, for she would always iron a shirt when he asked her.

And he had left it all suddenly, without a word of goodbye, because of his fatal facility of speech. There was no doubt that, once started, he could not stop. He told that passenger an astounding tale as he walked up the long jetty carrying the gentleman's valise. And what he realized now, as he sat with his back to the vibrating bulkhead and watched the white water spring upon the bulkheads, was that "when he got going" he was not himself but the person he imagined he was—that alert and efficient image in the rear of his brain! He would have to carry that other magniloquent self upon his back all his days, suffering for the follies of one who seemed to be a fantastic and irresponsible kinsman.

Carrying the gentleman's valise, and carried away himself upon a swift gust of speech, he was aware suddenly that he had been presented with a decker's ticket to Colón. He had shown conclusively and exhaustively that, if he could only get away from Sovranilla, he could regain his position in life. He had invited a college man to consider the agony of spirit another college man suffered in that

shaggy dump beside the emerald-green combers of the Caribbean. He saw himself, as he talked, flung down in uttermost misery behind some convenient wattled hut. He saw life unfolding for him amid the glare and rattle of the night life in Colón, wealth coming to him in heaps of paper and metal, followed by the respect of his contemporaries. So it had befallen, and he had walked out of the great docks, his own small satchel in his hand, his head high, until he was out of sight. Then he knew he was better off, far better off, in that little town of Sovranilla.

And as he thought it out now from his refuge behind the bollards, he saw himself as the owner of a secret which would make them all rich. He imagined himself walking about among them, able at a word to turn the whole place upside down. But he would never speak it. He saw himself again when he came to die, handing on the secret of the money he had cast into the sea at such and such a place, giving the bearings of the lighthouse and the buoy on the sunken wreck. He even saw in imagination the stir that would arise in Juan Pierella's botega when the news went round. Game cocks and roulette wheels would be forgotten while they discussed it in whispers. Little barrels!

And then, seeing those white-coated men by the door, their glances falling at times in hard curiosity upon him, hiding there between the bollards, he made a determined gesture and turned his mind resolutely from these fancies. And this resolution of his, like a grapnel, caught upon the first thing convenient in his mind. He would have nothing to do with these people on the ship. They had scarcely concealed their amusement while he had sounded them as to their willingness to go into a venture that might be a good thing. He ought to know by now that these people had no ideas above smuggling drugs or egret feathers in their underwear, or perhaps pilfering

trinkets from a passenger's trunks. He hated them, when they came ashore in Sovranilla. On one occasion he had risen in a paroxysm of disgust because a crowd of them had walked into the room where he was talking to that brown girl while she ironed. Even they, tough as they were, had seen something ominous in the gestures of the thin, unshaven man in shirt and pants, the cigarette trembling in his fingers as he lashed them with his incomparable tongue. A mistake, they muttered, and withdrew, ashamed. Neither he nor the girl had said a word for a long time, and then he had slipped away into the darkness.

As the evening wore on, it was evident that the people lodged beneath the straining awning, and attacked by the seas that leaped the bulwarks at uncertain intervals, would be in distress. The chief officer, in dirty white uniform and long rubber boots, came down the ladder from the bridge deck and consulted with the bo'sun, a harassed expression on his face as he looked around. The man crouching between bollard and bulkhead watched him with dislike. It was part of his character to hate uniforms; but behind that human trait there lurked the subtler reason that these men could not be induced to talk. They barked, or snarled, or grunted, or were sullenly silent. You couldn't get near them. He recalled the doctor, with his monocle, his spotless white and gold regalia, his cool, silent appraisal. They symbolized for him, these men, a world in which he had failed to get a footing. Thinking of them, Sovranilla, with its pigs and fowls walking in and out among the humans in the adobe huts, was, by comparison, home. There everybody talked, interminable rigmaroles in Spanish, about nothing at all—about the pimple on the nose of the conductor just in on the train from Calomar, or the new white enamelled basin Emilia Gurmesindo had ordered from New York through Wong Choy's general store, or the

bottle of perfume which the assistant commandant had smuggled for his wife, but which he had given to Vina Muñez, who was not esteemed.

And there was another and subtler reason hiding like a shadow behind all this. He was unable to appreciate their fidelity to an abstraction. He could be inspired by those he knew. As he flinched from a great wave that roared along the rail and vanished without coming inboard, he had a sudden vivid consciousness of his affection for the folk in Sovranilla. But to work all one's life for people one never saw was folly. An idea! A chimera! And no doubt flung aside when they were too old, eh?

He would have plunged into a fresh depth of imaginative reflections had not the whole ship sprung to life before his eyes. The officer stiffened to an alert rigidity as the whistle whined and blared suddenly above them, three long blasts, and then he ran to the side. The sailors followed suit, lining the bulwarks. The sound of men running came to the ears of the man crouching out of sight. He could remain in this position no longer. He rose, and looking earnestly at his little valise, walked to the side.

At first nothing could be seen save the great foam-flecked planes of the sea, a series of enormous and advancing ridges with toppling white crests as they passed; and the glare of the portholes so illuminated them that beyond was a place of vague darkness. But as he gazed, he saw on the starboard bow, a slow rising globe of intense light, a globe that exploded into a cascade of distant spangles. As the radiance died out and the ship sloped sharply forward down the weather side of a wave he saw something else, which evoked from his troubled and weary spirit a sigh of relief. Only for a moment he caught the deep red glow of the wreck buoy outside Sovranilla, and then it disappeared.

At once, as that rocket ascended into the distant dark-

ness, the officer and his crew abandoned their plans of moving the deckers to some other part of the ship and ran up the ladders to the boat deck away above them. And it was easy in the confusion for the man who had stood beside them at the bulwarks to follow unobserved. The mere act of ascending was an inspiration to him. For a moment he shrank back as he found himself confronting the long smooth camber of the promenade deck with its coloured lights and recumbent forms; and then he sprang on up the next ladder and came out upon a place of baffling obscurity and a masterful rushing wind.

For here was no water, only a ceaseless pressure of air. It roared about him as he stumbled over deadeyes and guy ropes. It tore at the collar of his shirt and flapped the trousers about his knees and ankles. But he gained what he wanted, a high clear view of that ruby light; and he clung to the corner of a deck house and watched it. All about him were men shouting as they toiled above one of the boats. The wavering beam of a flashlight suddenly threw them into brilliant relief, and their eager faces as they turned gave them the appearance of a party of conspirators. He shrank back into the shadow of the house as the light advanced. No one, as far as he could imagine, had noticed his hurried ascent with the crew. And now, while they were putting the boat out over the water, his mind became clogged with sensations.

He became aware that he was concealed from view by the very thing he had set out to seek. He could no longer see either the men at work or the ascending rockets from the bark on her beam ends below the bluff, or the ruby light winking from the wreck buoy. He was in deep shadow and sheltered from the roaring wind. And an ecstasy assaulted him, a desire, not so much to do what he had vividly imagined, as to see if for once his imagination had

not played him false. And he began to explore, concentrating in a few moments some of those discoveries often spread over years.

For while he was feeling for the door, behind which lay the money that had obsessed him, he was also exploring his own nature. He was conscious of standing beside himself and watching with painful curiosity what he would do. The door, of course, would be locked, but there was a window, a round scuttle opening inward and too small even for the strong boy the captain had sardonically specified. And he saw himself reach an arm into that window, and felt beneath his hand the rough edges of a barrel-head. For an instant he was almost in a swoon as he saw the enterprise crowned with success. A determined struggle with the door, a dozen swift journeys to the deserted lee rail, a quick fixing of position in his mind, and then away down to the raucous uproar of the deckers, stage by stage, emerging from some dark corner where he had been sleeping in innocence through the storm. How could they suspect him? He fondled the smooth perfection of the plan.

For once his imagination had not fooled him. Here it was, at last, the authentic foot of the rainbow. He saw himself in Sovranilla, telling the children, as the passing rain squall fled over the emerald and silver waves, that there was a cask of gold at the foot of yonder coloured arch. He would make an allegory of it, until the time came when they could go out and see how truly he had spoken.

And that thought made him shrink back as if he had been struck suddenly in the darkness. He felt the hot plates of the funnel against his hands and shoulders. There it was again, that devil with the forked tongue as it were, the devil of loquacity. He sprang away and stumbled aft

until he came to the rail overlooking the awning. It was going, the wind was ripping it, halyard by halyard, and he could discern the hullabaloo of the helpless folk dodging the ruthless lashings of the canvas. Could he accomplish nothing without this ebullient verbiage? His hands closed desperately on the rail, as if the rushing wind was a fate trying to bear him away.

And as he stood there fate came to him, in the guise of a man in oilskins who bumped into him in the darkness, who asked him who he was, and without waiting for an answer bade him go forward and man the boat.

He thought, afterward, when he had reached it, had clambered into it as it swayed on the outswung davits, that he must have spoken at length to the man in the oilskins—a man with a voice both furry and hoarse, red-faced and solemn under the sou'wester tied below his chin. Must have done that. The words of that man sang in his ears like harpstrings: For the Lord's sake, shut up—not so much conversation—talk later—see the rockets—get in—ready, bo'sun?—then lower away!

The ship had been stopped, and by the time the boat began to descend all way was gone from her. And it seemed to him, as he sat in the boat among a half-dozen of silent men, that their rapid passing by lighted deck and bright portholes, row on row, into the darkness below, was a symbol of life. Consecrated to a high purpose, they descended into unknown perils as if from another world; and suddenly they were afloat and the falls unhooked, and they were pulling with a mystical union of energy toward a cascade of falling stars.

Here, for a stark materialist, the episode would have ended in failure. But for him it was a revelation of his own potential character. Sitting there in the obscurity

of the storm, joined with unseen and unknown men in a common beneficent endeavour, he shed the pretentious trappings of an irksome life habit and comprehended resolutely his true bearings. He saw them as, when he was poised high upon a lofty wave crest, the ruby light of the wreck buoy shone across to him. He saw them when, after enormous labour, they had won to the lee side of the great bark, dismasted and careened upon the white-toothed rocks below the bluffs. He saw them as those frightened and weary men tumbled aboard with a shout and a whimper of delight. But he saw them best of all when, after the long, long pull, they gained the little harbour and stood at last upon the jetty below the silent huts of Sovranilla. It was the moment of dawn, and the steamer was standing in toward the anchorage. None of the strangers noted his gesture as he faced the eastern ranges where the sun had touched the snowy summits of the Andes with rose. It was a gesture of surrender and illumination, a symbol of what he now comprehended and believed.

And often, in after days, the children would see him pause in his talk when a rain squall fled away over the Caribbean and make that gesture toward the rainbow, watching in silence where the shaft of it sank into the emerald sea.

THE UNTARNISHED SHIELD

I

THERE are two things which inevitably befall you if you remain long in the capital of Guatemala. You will go to the Gloriana Café, and you will hear stories of the one-eyed Irishman who used to run revolutions single-handed. And if you go to the Gloriana you will discover the German beer, drawn from a genuine Bavarian cask let into the wall, instead of being made from imported materials and local water.

It is a pleasant place in the evening. There is dancing on the floor in the centre, when the waitresses, who are also public entertainers, drop their trays, take off their aprons, and join the young blades of the metropolis. The orchestra consists of marimbas chiefly, huge xylophones operated by three men each. Some people never get used to the terrific uproar of these things. There are other instruments, of course, drums and fiddles and a bass viol, and sometimes a saxophone. The Gloriana Café has two marimbas, and the smaller one is up against the wall in the orchestra corner, so that the farthermost performer, a young man with very light hair and a face like a saint, has to duck under to get out. As a rule, instead of following the others to an alcove and joining them in shaking dice in a leathern cup, he remains in a meditative attitude, but with the expression of a person wrapped in a dream of unbelievable bliss.

I used to watch him all the evening. There is precious little diversion in the Latin-American capitals perched along the high ridges of the Andes, from Quito clear up to Tegucigalpa and Mexico City. Compared with Buenos

Aires, Rio, and Havana they are, to us Northerners, slow. So, as my ship didn't leave Barrios for several days, and the weather was cool and pleasant in the mountains, I stayed around and got acquainted. In the Gloriana I met Rogerson. He, too, was waiting for the ship to New York. A word about Rogerson.

Most of the men you meet in a place like Guatemala City are either resident foreigners managing long-standing enterprises for their firms at home in London, New York, or Hamburg, or they are men like myself, mere transients spending a few weeks to transact some business deal, and catching the first available boat home. Rogerson, however, did not fall into either category. He knew the country very well indeed, but he was always going and coming. He was an oil man. He represented some concern in the western United States, and as far as I was able to gather, his job was to buy options on the output of wells wherever he might discover them in operation. This may be a clumsy description of Rogerson's profession. He never indulged in much personal exploitation. But anyhow, he had been a long while in Latin America, he had spent nearly a year on the coast at some time or other, and when I happened to remark the expression of the young man penned in behind the marimba at the Gloriana, Rogerson looked quickly at me and made a queer face. His leathery and sagacious features became complicated, and he rubbed his nose with a huge thumb nail.

"How does he strike you?" he asked, to my surprise.

"Why, if appearances mean anything at all, I'd say he was the happiest person on earth. You know, as a rule these people here don't *look* happy, even when I suppose they are."

Rogerson reached for his beer and took a good drink. Rogerson is an interesting man. He can talk, and he has

something to talk about. Anyone has who lives long in that part of the world and keeps his eyes open.

"Happy?" he said. "Happiest person on earth? That's just the problem. Whether he is or not."

"What—I was going to say on earth—do you mean?" I asked Rogerson. "He hasn't a history, by any chance?"

"Well," and I could see a rather attractive glint in Rogerson's eye, "I'd say he has. You know the proverb about nations without a history being the happiest. I've read that somewhere. Ought to apply to individuals as well, I guess. Yes, that fellow's got a history. I can tell it you if you'll promise not to call me a liar."

"That's easy, Mr. Rogerson," I said, signalling one of the girls to fill our glasses. "My thoughts are my own, of course."

"Don't get me wrong," said Rogerson. "There's nothing to him *but* a story. I mean you can't do anything for him."

"Where did he come from?" I put in.

"Over the line. He was raised on the coast in Honduras. I came across him in Barrios two or three years ago. He was in business with another man. Supposed to be. The other man was the whole show, in my opinion.

"The reason why I know so much about it is a long story," said Rogerson, "but it can be shortened. That poor nincompoop was only a sort of super in the play most of the time. There's nothing in him and there never was anything in him. It was his partner, Carlos Goenaga, who had the ability, the nerve, the personality, everything. And Carlos, you see, is dead. Buried under the palms in Sarofate. God rest his soul!"

I was astonished. The Gloriana was in full blast. The marimbas and fiddles and bass viol were thundering through a fox trot, while the girls, in their green uniforms, were dancing with the young fellows. The youth in the

corner was manipulating his hammers with astounding dexterity. They vibrated with the plangent, dizzy speed of a humming bird's wings. The expression on his face, the face of him who, I was to learn, was called Angel Varela, was rapt, and he looked up now and then, as though he held communion with invisible voices in the air above him. He was neither dark like the surrounding natives nor fair like a Northerner, but rather a pale, golden blond. I noticed that his chin bore a faint yellow fuzz of beard, and his hair, parted in the middle, rose in untidy waves brushed back from a high white forehead.

I was astonished, however, not at Angel Varela, but at the strong feeling in Rogerson's voice. I looked at him with a new and friendly interest. It was impossible to avoid the conviction that, to Rogerson, however negligible Angel Varela might be, the dead Carlos Goenaga represented something more than a passing transaction. There was an expression of grim bitterness and regret on Rogerson's face, as though he were reflecting upon the occasional futility of courage and virtue.

I said nothing, and when the noise ceased once more and the dancers had gone back to their tables, Rogerson went on again.

"I told you what my business is. Oil. My business is to look over the possibilities. Not only here, but all over. Now, there isn't any oil in Guatemala at present. I mean, they don't bring in any wells. But a geologist—and I'm not a bad geologist when I'm forced to admit it—will tell you that it's there, all right. One of these days we'll discover where to drill. We'll *have* to. I sometimes think our present civilization will simply crumble and disappear if we fail to discover fresh petroleum. Disappear like the Mayas a thousand years ago. Why did they suddenly vanish from these parts and leave great cities empty? No-

body knows. But think what would happen up North, if they suddenly ran out of petroleum. Life couldn't go on!

"Well, as I say, that's my job, and a few years ago I had one or two hints about a river just over the line in Honduras. I don't know any more about it than you do, but a sort of whisper goes round in the air, and everybody in the game has the same sort of thrill. Something like what goes through a place just before a real estate boom, I guess. It doesn't mean a thing, very often.

"I was a bit ahead of the general excitement in this case, I believe. I was there, almost on the spot, you might say. I mean I was in Belize, British Honduras. I came down to Barrios and took up my headquarters there. There's a lot of difference between Barrios and Atlantic City, I'll admit, but I've been in worse places.

"Much worse! Sarofate is one of them. You have never heard of it, of course. East along the gulf from Barrios, beyond Ceiba. It's at the mouth of the river I mentioned, a village in the bush. The banana plantations have crept up and surrounded it now, and there's a railway into Ceiba. But then you had to land through the surf in canoes. Sarofate. That's where the young fellow lies in his grave.

"I got into touch with some prospectors who knew who I was and arranged for them to go along and make a report. You know"—the attractive gleam came into Rogerson's eye for a moment—"we oil men aren't all cutthroat crooks doing honest republics out of hard-earned royalties. It's a business, like anything else. Not always a paying business, either.

"They came down to Barrios soon after I arrived, and we chartered a local schooner. There was a lot of formality, of course, because of the voyage, beginning in one republic and ending in another. There were bands of insurrectos in both republics at the time. Not an uncom-

mon state of affairs, as you know. So we had trouble proving we were not running stuff for the rebels. And it was hot in Sarofate.

"Now I'm not going to spin a yarn about my personal affairs. We all have our failures. There's oil there, no doubt, but not enough to make development worth while. I have my own idea of what we ought to do. Later on, perhaps.

"What I was going to say was that my people at home were inclined to be confident and optimistic. So we kept on. We lost our schooner because the owner sold her. And we had a big launch sent down, a launch with a kerosene motor. A fourteen-ton affair. Too big for us, but it was the only thing available. When it came from New Orleans I found they had forgotten to send anybody to run it. You can imagine how easy it was to find a man in Barrios! I was figuring I'd have to take charge of it myself, when one morning in walks a young fellow, speaking good English, and says:

" 'You want somebody to run that boat?'

" 'Can you run it?' I asked.

" 'Sure I can. I can run anything that turns round,' he says. 'Can I have the job?'

" 'Where've you sprung from?' I said, and he smiled in a way he had.

" 'Salvador,' he told me. 'I've been in a hydro-electric plant. Want to see my papers?'

"He showed me his papers, and I was flabbergasted to see he was a Honduran. He'd worked on ships and in a garage in New York. He showed me his operator's license to prove it and a letter from the boss. He'd been all over. I looked at him. He stood there, on his toes almost, watching to see if I was satisfied. He was like any young Spaniard

except that his eyes were lighter in colour and there was a hairtrigger look about him. Pep he had, I tell you.

" 'Yes,' I said. 'You can have the job. You haven't run away from the police, I suppose?'

"He gave me a sharp look.

" 'No more than you have,' he says, and looks me square in the eye.

"Well, he was the man he said he was. One thing only he asked for when we'd settled about his wages, and that was for me to take on a friend of his as a helper.

" 'Take on who you like,' I said. 'You'll be responsible for him.'

" 'Sure,' he says, with his smile—a very attractive lad he was when he smiled. 'I know him. His sister's my sweetheart.'

"That was Carlos Goenaga, the young fellow I was telling you of. And his friend was this Angel Varela, who's sitting over there. The one you asked about.

II

"There was one thing I very soon noticed about those two. Carlos had one of these flashing, razor-edge minds that see a thing, understand it, and do it in one moment, you might say. A sort of instinctive intelligence. He knew a thing was going to happen. I've never seen anybody in my life who was so alive as that boy. But his side-kick, this Angel Varela, was a slow-moving duffer. If his chum told him to do anything he'd do it and do it well, but he'd never see it to do for himself. He'd watch the other one's face as a dog watches his master, but he hadn't the dog's intelligence. No harm in him, but useless, as we say.

"But Carlos watched and took care of him. He'd give him credit for things he'd done or thought of himself. It

was his blind spot. When we were running down the coast, I'd hear him coaching Varela what to do in a low voice. I asked him once, when the other one was ashore, why he made such a fuss over him. Why didn't he let him stand on his own feet?

"'Why, his sister's my sweetheart,' he said; but that wasn't the whole of it. I've thought of it often, and my belief is he was doing it on account of pride. You see, he was intelligent enough to know that he was almost a freak among his own people, and he was making a play to let us see that he himself was just an average young Honduran and his side-kick was another. It's the only way to explain it. He'd been round, you see, and understood how we look down on foreigners, and he felt the difference. He was quick to bite, too. One of the drillers, a big bonehead who knew just about enough to get out of his own road, called Carlos a damn dago one day, and the young fellow dropped him, crash! with a wrench.

"But the other, he'd never been anywhere except on the coast. He and Carlos came from Truxillo, an old town away to the eastward on the Mosquito Coast, as they used to call it. Old Pirate Morgan looted it, I believe, though what he found there couldn't have been much. Angel Varela had no more initiative than a sick hen. He had no stomach for an active life at all. It was his admiration and fear of Carlos that kept him up to the mark. Carlos gave me a hint of this when I asked him one day why he didn't send Angel home to his mother.

"'You're only tying a weight round your neck,' I said.

"'His father and mother are dead,' he said. 'His father was shot. His sister is at home. She would chase him out again if he went home. That's my sweetheart, you understand. She's smart. When we get married we'll move to the city.'

"'And get on like a streak,' I said to myself; but to him I said: 'But what's this poor simp got to do with that? You know yourself he's a false alarm.'

"'No!' he says. 'He's all right. He is very simple and he has never been to any place. He is afraid of the locomotive in Barrios. Barrios is a big city to Angel.'

"Well, there you are. He hadn't been to school much, Carlos told me. No head for lessons. Used to spend all his time in the church, and playing his marimba.

"I've never been able to make out whether Carlos knew the truth or not. If he had, I don't believe he'd have done any different. What riles me is the waste! Him rotting in the bush in Sarofate, and this—well, you see what he's doing!"

I did. He was in the midst of a whirlwind run on the marimba. Above the croon of the viol the clear metallic trilling of the hammers was like the song of birds in the forest. His face bore that incredibly rapt expression I had already noted, and I had a sudden comprehension, or suspicion, of the truth to which Rogerson had darkly alluded. I was convinced, at any rate, that Angel Varela was engrossed, behind the music, with his own mysterious thoughts.

"Yes, Barrios was a big city to Angel! Just fix it in your mind. Barrios! One street of stores, a boardwalk, a hotel, and a few native huts. You could hardly say he'd seen a locomotive, because when one of them moved or whistled he'd run and hide. Only his respect for Carlos got him to stay by the launch until he became accustomed to it. He was much more at home in Sarofate. He'd squat down and talk to the Indians in front of their palm huts until Carlos called him. And on the launch he'd go and crouch in the bows and watch the waves breaking away and the

spray flying, and come back with a sort of lost look in his face that made me sorry for them both.

"However, that's neither here nor there. The gist of it is that I finally convinced my people up North that we were wasting time and money. I wanted to follow up a trail I knew of in the Changuinola country on the Costa Rican frontier. Twice we'd had a raid of rebels on our plant. And there was no sense in spending a year more in drilling with the country in that condition. The men kept falling sick. And at last I got the word to close down.

"What beat me was how to dispose of the launch. I thought of taking it down to Chiriqui with me, but I'm no sailor, I may tell you. She rolled her rail under in the Gulf, so the open Caribbean would be no picnic. I was in my hotel room in Barrios, cleaning up and trying to think of somebody I knew who had need of a boat and the money to pay for it, when in walks Carlos Goenaga.

" 'Now what's the trouble?' I said, for he had been paid off. I made him an offer as well. I said I'd take him with me, but not this other one. And he had refused. Enough said. So now I asked him what he wanted. He said he had a chance to go into business for himself.

" 'I'm not standing in your way, am I?' I said.

" 'Not if you sell me the boat,' he says. 'What do you want for her?'

"I looked at him. You see, I liked him well enough by then. He was smart, that boy, straight as a string, white all through. And he smiled, worried as he was.

" 'Why,' I said, 'I couldn't ask less than three thousand dollars, and where would you find all that money?'

" 'I have two thousand in the Bank of Canada,' he says, pulling out a book. 'My wages for two years in Salvador. Will you give me credit for the balance? I've got a chance to make money.'

" 'How? Running ammunition to Puerto Cortez and getting caught the second time out?' I said, giving him a wink. He laughed.

" 'No,' says he, 'just freight out of here, to Ceiba and Truxillo. I have a partner.'

" 'Who's he?' I asked. He knew I was with him if it was within the law. He was one of those young fellows who understand without a lot of talk.

" 'Oh, it's Mr. Da Costa, who used to be secretary to the President.'

"Well, I knew Mr. Da Costa well enough, but he was far from being my friend. We had had words, to tell you the truth.

"Mr. Da Costa was one of those men who may be described as busy, if you know what I mean. Up here in the capital, where he was most of the time then, he had a peculiar reputation. Or rather, to you and to me it would be a very inconvenient reputation. He was a characteristic type, and a type which in my opinion is responsible for a good deal of the international trouble in the world. He was a lawyer, an *abogado*, by profession, and he had his fingers in all sorts of pies. When I came in contact with him he was secretary to the President, and it was in connection with a bond of five thousand dollars we had put up as foreign concessionaires. That was the law, and it had been paid. What I wished to get from Mr. Da Costa was, who received the interest? You can get a safe eighteen per cent. down here, and that's nine hundred a year.

"Well, I got a taste of Mr. Da Costa's quality in trying to get in touch with him. He had an office in a courtyard on the Avenida Sur. The arrangement of the place seemed designed to put you in an uneasy state of mind from the start. Brass plate outside on the wall: *Germán Lopez Da Costa, Abogado*. Inside, a deserted passage with an old

Ford, one tire off, and tools all round. Looked as if the chap had given it up and gone away to die. You looked into a door that seemed promising and found an old woman pottering about, cleaning. So you spoke to her, and she would point without looking up from her work. Just point, as though people were bothering her all day. No doubt they were.

"And the thing to remember is that if Mr. Da Costa happened to be really in, he was watching you all the time you were going through this performance. There was a screen of vines across the courtyard, and behind it, through a slit in his office shutters, he could see everybody come in. I've never felt any particular horror over Da Costa's end, not because I'm bloodthirsty or don't sympathize with Señorita Varela, but simply because I have never got over the discovery that the man had often been watching me come in and go away while his secretary, a sandy female, half-Spanish and half-Scotch, would be telling me the Señor Abogado was in the courts.

"That was his way, to keep you running round trying to get him. I lost patience at last and pushed into the office. There he was, smoking a cigarette and smiling. He said the secretary had misunderstood his orders. He was always glad to see me, and so on.

"And when I got him down to cases and jammed him tight in a corner, who was to have the interest on this five thousand in escrow, he wriggled, swung his leg, shuffled his papers and says finally,

" 'That can be arranged. That can be arranged, Señor Rogerson. Through me.'

"What do you know about that? It could be arranged! Through him. And when I said, 'Oh, no!' I got a taste of his quality.

" 'Why don't you register in Honduras?' he says, still

swinging his leg. He knew it was because we would at that time have had no security, no matter what bond we put up. I very nearly told him it was because there were too many like him there. He was a Honduran really, but these republics all have reciprocal citizenships, you know.

"I saw he was trying to get me away, but I haven't been down here for nine years for nothing. I said that had nothing to do with the justice of the case in hand.

"'Oh, justice!' he says, getting up and looking through his shutter at the screen of leaves. 'I see,' he says. 'Justice!' You'd have thought he'd suddenly caught sight of Justice out there in the yard, waiting to see him, and his secretary telling her he was not in. He wasn't often at home to her!

"That was Mr. Germán Da Costa, damn his soul!

III

"But," went on Rogerson after a moment's silence, "do you suppose I could get that young Don Carlos Goenaga to see what sort of man Da Costa was? Not at all. When he'd gone to the United States Da Costa had been vice consul at the port and had given him one or two tips, such as every consul gives emigrants from his own parts. To young Carlos, Da Costa was a fellow countryman and a true friend. I saw I had to watch my step. He had learned to know me and trust me, but that hadn't in any way diminished the suspicion and dislike he had for North Americans. That's one of the peculiar things about us down here," said Rogerson sourly. "A Britisher or a German who gives them a fair deal is credited with it and so is his country. But we, we're regarded only as exceptions to the usual run of Americans. We have to watch our step all the way.

"You see, he was what we call 'sensitive' about it. When I boggled at him hitching up with a man like Da Costa, all I had done to merit his confidence seemed to vanish. He saw me simply as a gringo trying to knock one of his fellow countrymen.

" 'Look here,' I said, 'you say you've two thousand dollars. Why don't you go back to New York and start in business there? It's safer. A man needs large capital here, and pull too.'

" 'I've got that with Don Germán Da Costa,' he said, with a chip on his shoulder. 'Here I am somebody. In New York I am only "a bloody dago." '

" 'Is Don Germán Da Costa putting up any capital?' I asked him.

" 'Credit,' he said. 'He has arranged the credit for the freight, and he has secured business in Ceiba and Truxillo.'

" 'How much can you pay, cash?' I asked, keeping my opinion of Da Costa's magnificent generosity to myself.

"He said he could let me have fifteen hundred dollars and a note for the rest, due in two years.

"Well, the deal went through, though I was bothered by a faint suspicion that the original idea had come from Da Costa. He knew everything that went on between San José and Belize, that fellow. He must have known that my people were getting out of it, and that the launch would be for sale. And he had the politician's trick of getting the local people to remember him by doing them a favour. That's how Don Carlos remembered him. And let me tell you, the very fact that Da Costa had tried to trick me and made me dislike him was a feather in his cap to Don Carlos. Yes, although the young fellow liked me and came to me to do him a favour, Da Costa had probably told him it was no favour but a convenience to me. So it

was, and there we were, all in the right and all at loggerheads again. That's Latin America.

"It was all in character for Da Costa to engineer a deal which would profit himself and give me, an old offender, an uneasy feeling that I was going to get stung. I put it up to the young fellow because, when you come to think of it, the launch belonged to my company, not to me. I was only an agent as far as loss was concerned. I said:

" 'Suppose you have a smash, are you going to carry the insurance and all?'

" 'Why sure,' he says, standing up straight and looking me in the eye.

" 'And will the underwriters pay up if you are running opium for the Chinamen or a few cases of cartridges at the time?' I asked him. He began to walk up and down the office, muttering.

" 'I am a man of honour,' he said, 'and I give you my word.'

" 'And Mr. Da Costa, what about his word?'

" 'Mr. Da Costa is a man of position, and his word is sufficient for me,' said Don Carlos, scowling.

" 'I don't care a damn about his position,' I told him. 'It's *your* word I want.'

" 'You've got it,' he said. 'You are my friend, and I will see this thing through.'

"I went down to see him the morning I sailed for Cristobal. He had been working twenty hours a day getting the engine overhauled. That was one of the clauses in Mr. Da Costa's little partnership agreement, by the way.

" 'Do what you like after you've paid me,' I said. I put it that way because I did not want him to feel I was trying to patronize him. He looked up from where he was in the engine hatch, flung the long black hair out of his eyes, and gave me one of his sharp bright looks. Then he sprang

out upon the dock as easy as a cat, and stood alongside of me.

"I put out my hand, and he took it with a sudden grip, as though he felt himself slipping off the world and was holding on tight. . . . You know, I had a glimpse just then of—how shall I put it?—a glimpse of that young man's soul. That's another name for personality, I suppose. But this was more. It was a glimpse of something I liked very much indeed. I had a passing thought at the time, that I would have liked to be his father. . . . No matter. He accompanied me to the inner end of the jetty. I was astonished at the regret I felt at leaving him. I saw Angel Varela looking at us with his vacant stare. I saw him flinch and duck as my steamer let out a long warning blast. And I saw in my mind's eye Mr. Germán Da Costa in his little office behind the screen watching me wait.

IV

"And so," said Rogerson, "I went away South, and for a few months I was busy. No sooner was I on the ground there than a little war started between Panama and Costa Rica. You wouldn't remember about it, of course. I had no word from Don Carlos how he was making out, and I had no time to think about him just then. Only when a letter arrived with a draft for four hundred dollars did I give the matter my attention.

"I could see by the letter that Don Carlos was not having a very good time, but he was keeping a stiff upper lip. He said they had made several trips to Sarofate with freight. Things were not very good, he said, because the political situation was grave.

"Not a word about Da Costa, but I could read between the lines. That letter gave me the impression of a

man getting desperately tangled up in business he didn't like. There was a suggestion of the writer struggling like a swimmer, a strong swimmer with something clutching at his feet, calculating how far he has to go rather than how he could get out.

"And in the next letter, with a draft for two hundred dollars, I could see he was in trouble. What it was I had to guess. The political situation was still grave. There was a revolution pending in what he called 'my country.' It might be necessary for him 'to go out of business and get another situation.' Could I get him a position in my company? And so on. He was beaten.

"I waited awhile; there were no more letters, and I came to the conclusion that he had had to go out of business and was hiding away somewhere—gone back to Salvador, perhaps!—to spade up the money he owed me before coming to life again. I had faith, but faith is a peculiar chameleon-like business at best. You hear people say: 'I have perfect faith in him,' or even in her. I'm not so sure there is such a thing as perfect faith except among genteel imbeciles who are probably talking about themselves. If I ever believed in anybody, if I ever credited a young man with honour, I felt that way about Don Carlos Goenaga. And yet when I was packing up to go North, calling at Managua and Tegucigalpa on the way home, I had come to the conclusion I had made a mistake and lost my money. There was nothing I could do about it either, as far as I could see.

"Now, from Tegucigalpa to this city is only a couple of hundred miles on a mule, but I had had enough of mules and wanted a rest. So I came up by sea. And when I fell in with a friend in the Anglo-Caribbean Foundation Company I thought of Da Costa. I asked if he was still in the city.

" 'As a private citizen,' said my friend. 'He has resigned all his appointments. It is said he is going as Minister to Tegucigalpa.'

"I said he was born there, and my friend nodded. He knew all about Da Costa, of course. Da Costa, he told me, had tried to horn in on a distribution of bonus stock to the Foundation Company's bondholders on the strength of his influence with the President. Just before he had quit, too! My friend told me another interesting item in Mr. Da Costa's development into a diplomat. His brother was Minister of War in the new Honduran Cabinet. And the real reason for his quitting his official job in the administration was that he was discovered in the house of a notorious Bavarian woman."

"But," I said to Rogerson, "they don't make a fuss about such a thing here, do they?"

"Oh, no," said he. "They didn't care about that; but there was a row of some sort, and the police saw Da Costa there in company with Andreas Chorrera, who has been chased out of every one of the five republics. You've heard of him perhaps."

"A guerilla general," I murmured. "Yes."

"What the newspapers call a guerilla general," said Rogerson. "A gunman, a gangster, and a killer. He used to be hired by governments as gunmen are hired by politicians. I met him in a bar in Colón once. A big lazy ruffian. He used to dramatize himself. He would dress like a peon, let his stubble grow, and make his eyes bloodshot by holding them over wood smoke. But he had a personal magnetism of some sort. The *vaqueros* and *mozos* would follow him. He could talk their back-country lingo like buckshot rattling on sheet iron, and he had done a few pretty awful things when he was full of *aguardiente*. You remember the Juarez case, of some young girls shut up

in a dark house full of serpents? That was Chorrera enjoying himself, though he said afterwards that he wasn't there.

"It was a slip of Da Costa's to be found with him. Yet how cleverly he turned it to account! He knew a journalist on the *Mundo el Dial*, who had borrowed money from Da Costa and could never pay, and he got him to write an article denouncing the supine indolence of the Ministry of Haciendas in permitting the running of contraband over the frontier. General Chorrera had come to the capital to report these outrages and had been rebuffed. In despair he had turned to a true friend of the republic, Señor Don Germán Da Costa, and that patriot, comprehending the extreme seriousness of the communications and the misunderstanding inevitable if he were to be seen in conference with the general, had consented to go to the establishment of Señora Doña Quentano in the public interest. And so on, and so on. You may not know the school of journalism founded on the public speeches of Simón Bolívar. It's wonderful stuff when dictated by an accomplished double-crosser like Da Costa."

"And was there any truth in all this?" I asked.

"Not a scrap. Da Costa was not worrying about the contraband. He was hobnobbing with Chorrera in his own interests. The fact was, things were too peaceful to please some people over the frontier. The President they had was honestly trying to get order out of chaos and have a little money surplus for roads and schools. He and Da Costa's brother had had a row over army estimates. The President said the country was peaceful and satisfied and a big army in the western departments was unnecessary. General Da Costa said it was. Now, I dare say you, being a visitor here, won't be able to put all that together and connect it with our friend's friendship with Chorrera."

"Yes, I can," I said, "I have heard of *agents provocateurs* all over the world."

"Ah, but the motive!" said Rogerson. "Do you get the motive?"

"Ambition of two unscrupulous brothers," I said. "I've heard of that too."

"All right so far as it goes," admitted Rogerson. "But figure out how that affected me. My company had sunk a lot of money in that place 'in the western departments.' And more than a little of it was sunk in what they call the *frontera indefinitiva.* Now do you see?

"I never lost a moment. I went down the Avenida Sur to find Señor Don Germán Da Costa, late secretary to the President, who was about to send him to Tegucigalpa as Minister. It almost made me feel faint, to think of the pickings Da Costa would have up there. And I was convinced that my sudden hunch was correct, that the desire for an army 'in the western departments' had something to do with my abandoned drillings near Sarofate."

"Oh!" I said. "Now I *do* see. And what had he to say about it? Was he in?"

"The sandy secretary, one of these girls who seem born to be shyster-lawyers' clerks, and who never look you in the eye, said he was out. I didn't believe her. The telephone in Da Costa's office rang, and if he had been out it would have gone on ringing. I pushed her away and walked in on him. He was standing at the instrument, one cloth-topped shoe with jade buttons on a chair, and he looked round to see who I was. Then he went on talking, a sort of anticipatory ring in his voice. I remembered that.

" 'Ah!' he said, and he came over with his hands in his pockets, as though to examine this new specimen of Americano. 'The very man I wanted to see. I have something for you, Señor Rogerson.' Very jaunty he was.

"I said I hoped it was some news of my boat.

" 'Your boat? *Your* boat?' he says, as though lost in wonder at my simplicity. 'Oh,' he goes on, 'your *boat!*' That was his way. 'No,' he says. 'Your concession. Will you sell? It's no good, you know,' he added, showing his teeth, 'but we are men of honour and want everything shipshape.'

" 'Let's get the business of the boat out of the way first,' I said. 'Your partner, Carlos Goenaga . . .'

"Da Costa was looking at his nails.

" 'My *late* partner,' he said. 'He was unfortunate. It was most inconvenient for me too. One of my important business deals was—ah—postponed.'

" 'You mean he's dead?' I said.

" 'And buried,' he assured me, and then in an undertone, 'unless the birds, the *buitres*, have discovered him.'

"A sudden harsh note came into Señor Don Germán Da Costa's voice, something of the scream of the jackal, as he giggled and eyed me as well. Eyed me carefully in spite of his giggle.

" 'You mean I can't collect on my note, then?' I said, though I knew it was no use trying to argue with a swine like that.

" 'Your note? Just now it was your boat. Perhaps you mean your—ah—goat?' he suggested. 'Oh, as to that! Yes. That can be taken up. I'll buy it from you at a discount,' says Da Costa.

" 'Who will pay you?' I said, surprised.

" 'I mean,' he explained, 'I'll buy your note when the insurance company pays up the policy. Goenaga had his life insured,' he went on, 'and he transferred it to me to cover his obligations.'

"Well, I think Da Costa saw it coming, for he stepped away almost before he was done speaking. But I got him. It was a good fat satisfying kick. I could have killed him,

and been jailed for life here, I suppose. But it was only for a time. The only trouble is, the birds, the *buitres*, will never get his dirty carcass. He's in a marble tomb, with a broken column and a weeping marble angel: Don Germán Da Costa, *abogado*, patriot, martyred in the war for *La Libertad*.

V

"So I went on home. And when I found that the ship was calling at Puerto Castilla I thought to myself that I might try and see that girl Don Carlos used to speak about. My heart was heavy. I remembered the strange way the young fellow had looked at me as we stood on the dock that last morning, and I wanted to know the truth.

"So I waited till the ship began loading her fruit in Castilla, which is across the bay from Truxillo, and got a rail car to take me round. He had shown me a picture of her once, with a bright, sharp face, clean-cut as an eagle, looking straight to sea beyond the old gray wall of the Spanish fort. Not much like her brother Angel, was Isabella Varela.

"I walked up the steep little street, all grass and weeds, from the railroad to the plaza of Truxillo. There was a little park, with a kiosk for beer, and I sat down. I asked the man if he knew where this girl lived. He said,

" 'Señor, that is Señorita Varela's house,' and he pointed to a long low place on the corner. Part of it was a store. I went over.

"She wasn't a good looker in the sense we use the words nowadays. I'd call her a handsome woman. You'd never think of her as a girl. No short hair or make-up, and thinner than usual. Black hair and very bright black eyes. Dressed in black. And about twenty-five years old.

"I began to tell her I was only a passing stranger, but she

shook her finger in front of her eyes—you know how these Latin Americans do—and looked at my card.

" 'No, no. You were a good friend to my Carlos,' she said. 'He spoke of you many times.'

"So she told me, sitting in her little *patio* fanning herself, the rest of the story. When I said I had seen Señor Da Costa lately, she spat suddenly at the sound of his name.

" 'Wait till he comes into this country,' she said.

" 'I understand he comes very soon,' I said, 'as Minister.' She gave me a sharp look and went on with her story.

" 'Between them, my brother, and that Da Costa, they killed my Carlos,' she said, and there were tears in her eyes which somehow did not fall.

"She spoke frankly of her brother, this Angel Varela. A natural when a child, yet rational enough in their home. He had had a religious streak in him. Had visions. Of course he had never been anywhere in the world and knew nothing except what the padres told him. And the poor padres, what do they know? If they get as far as the city here, it's about all. Angel Varela had visions of beautiful cities set on high mountains, full of music and happy people. Imagine it, if you can, in the heat of the coast. Nobody could make him believe such places existed except in his own dreams of heaven. When Carlos spoke of New York, telling his sweetheart of the wonders of the great city, Angel only saw in his mind a place of adobe houses like Truxillo, only larger, with a plaza and an old fort where he could lie under the muzzles of the old guns and look across a blue gulf at blue mountains.

"Young Carlos, in love with this slender vital virgin, accepted the poor harmless creature as his own responsibility. They thought, both of them, that once out in the big world Angel would improve and perhaps get quite able to look after himself.

"The funny thing is," went on Rogerson, "that children, animals, and backward adults are all open to the same suspicion. You can never tell when helplessness turns into cunning, like starch into sugar when fruit ripens. And there was also the 'sensitiveness' of Carlos to outside criticism. He was jealous of anybody criticizing his friend. When Isabella suggested that he take Angel to New York, Carlos objected violently. He knew how the poor lad's defects would be set down against his whole race and nationality.

"Sometimes, she told me, she felt remorse over permitting Carlos to burden himself with her brother. Yet it was impossible for Angel ever to earn a living playing his marimba in a little coast town.

" 'Señor,' she asked me, 'what is a woman's duty when she loves?'

"As if I knew, confound her! It is hard enough to know one's own duty very often. I could see that, because of her simplicity of heart and her lack of experience, she had been puzzled. There had seemed no way of deciding exactly what was best.

"Each trip he made as far as Truxillo, Carlos told his young lady how things went and the difficulties his friend and partner Da Costa was discovering in getting freight. Twice they had been to Sarofate, however. On the second occasion a big bull-necked person in a very new white linen suit and Panama hat came as a passenger. Da Costa had come down with him. To his partner Carlos said in private: 'I know that man. I have seen him in Salvador.' 'Oh, no,' said Da Costa. 'He is an oil man. He is going to look at that oil concession at Sarofate. If he thinks we can work it the government will buy it—from us. He has influence among the Indians.'

"But Carlos knew that the man with influence among

the Indians was Andreas Chorrera. And he was very disturbed to see how Angel Varela took to the big blackguard sitting there in his new white suit, chewing a piece of sugar cane and spitting the pieces over the side. Talking all the way along the coast, lying on the fore deck at night, Varela crouched beside him, listening to the Lord knows what rigmarole of rubbish about the fine times and fine clothes he'd have if he went along with Chorrera up into the beautiful mountains. Big cities full of beautiful girls and golden trinkets.

"Chorrera, sitting in the dirty *comandancia* in Sarofate, on an ammunition box, chewing his sugar cane, when Carlos came up to argue about losing his friend, looked him over. The young lad, he said, was just the fellow he was looking for. Now his beard was coming, thin, blond, and silky, he would seem to the poor *Indios* just like an apostle. And this man, who was being paid to start a tin-pot revolution on the *frontera indefinitiva,* told Carlos to clear out and look after his own affairs 'or I will take you too,' he said, 'and by and by your *lancha.*'

"That was a bad time for Carlos when he arrived in Truxillo without Isabella's brother. As she put it, 'He understood, señor, that there was nothing he could possibly do at that moment. And it made him suffer terribly. His duty to me, to his partner, and to you pulled him in every direction. Señor,' she said, 'his soul was torn.'

"But he understood by that time, I imagine, that he was being betrayed by Da Costa. Carlos was perfectly familiar with the results of letting a man like Chorrera get going among the *Indios* of the villages along the western frontier. It was his knowledge of the practices of some of his people which had forced him out, when his parents died, into a different, gringo world. He *was* what these hifalutin orators and rhetorical spellbinders who edit

Latin-American newspapers would like to be, a man of unsullied honour, who would keep his word and lose his life, and never worry whether anybody knew about it or not.

"What was it made him do it? Some old seed of Spanish knighthood coming to flower on that bright desolate coast? To you, to me, that coast is appalling in spite of its fertility, its brightness and beauty, unless we think of what we are going to get out of it, to spend among our own people, under our own skies and our own flag. And what haunts me now is the horror of the young man dying in a miserable fight on that coast, a failure in his own land, losing everything except his honour, without even a heavy stone to keep the birds from his bones! It is his country, of course, and where else should he lie? But think of how many like him will be sacrificed before they can pull out of that horrible morass of blood and lies and stupidity!

VI

"He was being betrayed because, to tell the truth, Da Costa had first put the idea of buying the boat into his head. He had one of those minds which work with the speed of lightning on an entirely logical basis. He remembered. The extraordinary thing about him was that his memories were changed into passion charged, as you may say, with resolution.

"But the reality of the betrayal was not so much in Da Costa inveigling him into carrying that guerilla chieftian Chorrera into a friendly territory, transporting arms and stores, supposedly for the purpose of jumping my company's concession, but really to move the *frontera indefinitiva.* No, it was Da Costa's betrayal of himself as a man of honour. It was the destruction, in the mind of young

Carlos, of the delusion that Doctor Germán Da Costa was an older replica of himself, a *caballero* who would keep his word.

"And there was another thing. The voyage before, these two young people, Don Carlos Goenaga and Isabella Varela, had agreed that on his next visit they would be married and she would go with him to Barrios. She would sell her little business and help Carlos, so that in time he could use her as his agent and wriggle free from Da Costa. This was the state of affairs, she told me, when he came up to the house, and told her that her brother had run away into the bush, and Andreas Chorrera, with seventeen thousand rounds of ammunition and five hundred Mannlicher rifles, was snug in Sarofate collecting a revolutionary 'army.' And his own wonderful Da Costa, of whom he had spoken to her in such terms of extravagant admiration as a match for any gringo and so forth, was the man who had brought it about.

"That, she told me, was what weighed on his mind. He said 'We can't marry now, my Isabella. I must go and get Angel back. He will be killed, the poor fool!' Nor would she have consented to marry Carlos until he could get out of this mess into which he had walked, believing in Germán Da Costa. The poor fool, as he called that unfortunate, was only a sort of embodiment of the destiny against which he was struggling, a nightmare of a destiny, if you ask me.

"He went back to Sarofate, of course. I would like to have known his thoughts and plans. You go into Sarofate, you sweat through the bush to that little village sitting there in a blaze of sunlight that makes the very air shake, and when you take the trail beyond you go into the unknown. What could he do? I have no answer to that question, yet in my mind I believe he would have done something. Against that big beefy Chorrera, sitting on an

ammunition case in his white suit, letting his bristles grow before he showed himself to the *Indios*, Carlos could only offer brains, and brains are not to be despised even in the bush.

"But when he again dropped anchor in Sarofate, Chorrera was gone. In the village the men had been cautiously bringing over the mules they had hidden on the other side of the river, and digging up the saddles and *machetes* they had buried under their floors. Chorrera was gone. Carlos found some of them in the church on their knees, each on his neckcloth, spread on the old brown floor. In the evening he went with them to the cantina and asked about Angel Varela. They crossed themselves. They had news of him. Men coming down the mountain trails from Camotán with loads of earthenware in wicker cages on their backs, had seen him. The *Indios* believed he was a *Cristo*. It was April, when the air is still and all the fields are burning in preparation for the rains which mix the ashes with the earth and fertilize the crops. And through the smoke and flame at night the *Indios* had seen this new strange creature passing, calling out to them strange words, and they were stealing down into the valleys to hear who he was and from what holy city he had come. He was only a few miles away, they said, but a couple of days on a mule might not find him.

"Carlos waited. He knew there was more than this behind the villagers' talk. *Indios* don't travel for days from their fields at burning time to get news of a saint. He knew armed bands were moving over the mountains. The government had got wind of Chorrera and suspected he was getting ready to cut the great Camino Real up to the capital at a time when a consignment of minted money was on its way from North America to the treasury. As a matter of fact, I don't suppose Chorrera was aware of this train of treasure. But it seems he suddenly found himself between

two forces of federal troops who meant business, because if Chorrera got that money they wouldn't get any wages for six months. Nor would Da Costa's brother get his salary. Then again, it was possible the President suspected his chief of staff of trying to waylay the treasure on his own account, so he sent another general and had Da Costa's brother remain in the capital. What do you know, anyhow, when you come down here? It's all a maze of wires and lies and grabs.

"So he waited, sending a message by a sailing canoe to Isabella in Truxillo. He waited sometimes on the boat and sometimes in the village, at the cantina. And a day or two later the army of Chorrera began to straggle into Sarofate. They had been riding or running for days and nights, caked with blood and dust and ashes. They sank down anywhere and called for water. The flies settled on their limbs and the dogs and pigs snuffed round at the dried blood. Carlos began to turn the *comandancia* into a hospital. He got the women to work. He made the children fan the flies off the wounded. All the time he asked about Angel Varela. And during the night the poor crazed creature came walking into Sarofate, with the wonderful Andreas Chorrera, badly wounded in the shoulder and thighs, on a mule.

"Here again," said Rogerson musingly, as we walked along that same Avendia Sur towards the Club, where we had cards, "here again I would like to have some notion of what Carlos thought. It was an extraordinary situation for a young fellow like him. All these people, even Chorrera on his mother's side, were of his own race and nation, yet what must he have thought? What he did is easily told. He waited until dawn and then, getting hold of that Angel Varela, that embodiment of all his terrible misfortunes, he hurried down to the beach where the boat lay anchored.

"He was in a canoe, sculling rapidly through the surf, when a lot of men began breaking through the trees in pursuit. They were carrying Chorrera, who knew the troops were following down the mountains and that if he didn't get away they would give him some of his own famous treatment. He had roused all the men who could move and was bawling to work them up to desperation. But Carlos was aboard the launch before they could get Chorrera, swearing in a terrible fashion, into a canoe.

"And he would have got away even then if it had not been for Angel Varela. The engine was running and he was hauling up the anchor when the poor creature began to sob and moan with grief. Could they not take *el Capitan?* He was wounded. He had been so kind to poor Angel. Carlos must have been in a way when he found the fellow slobbering and clinging to him, begging him to take that hulking butcher who was thinking of nothing except his own skin. And while he was pushing him away and finishing with the anchor, the canoes were making through the surf towards him. He was surrounded.

"What did they care for his revolver? He turned and turned, working towards the tiller and engine clutch, looking for a chance to run clear. They had arms too, but how could they get away if they killed him? They cared nothing for his gun, after those terrible days of pursuit in the Sierras. Chorrera screamed at Carlos to take him on board. Carlos said, no, he did not trust him. The launch would be swamped if they all came. He made a quick dive and kicked the clutch of the engine ahead and the launch shot forward. Chorrera fired and missed. The launch went careening in a circle towards open sea. And suddenly the clutch slipped. Carlos was bending down to reach it when Angel Varela pulled the tiller over and they whirled round on a canoe, knocking everybody into the water.

"And now, mind you, that girl coming to Sarofate later on could only gather from a frightened *comandante* and a wounded peon who had been forced to go with Chorrera, a vague notion of what followed. There were men swimming and clinging to the canoe as it rolled in the huge swell. There was the launch suddenly riding sideways into that same swell and rushing towards the bar piled with mahogany logs. There were buzzards wheeling in the hot blue sky. And there was Chorrera swaying in his canoe, one hand on a man's head and leaning forward as he fired again. And there was Carlos struggling with the poor demented creature to tear him away from the tiller, becoming still and heavy when the launch suddenly reared up on the bar and crashed and became still too, as though shot through the heart."

VII

We walked into the great hall of the Strangers' Club and rang for a waiter. The high white chamber, with its enormous mirrors, was empty. The music balcony yawned above. In the far corner a dark-complexioned man looked out at us from a reading room where month-old newspapers were piled on the table. Across the tiled floor came a white-coated servant with a tray like a polished silver shield. Rogerson sank down on a lounge and began to refill his pipe. I wondered whether he would revert to the subject again. He did.

"The story of the mad *Cristo* who followed the army along the trails back to the capital spread all over the coast," he said. "Miss Varela heard it, of course. She took the diligence at Tela to find him, but when she arrived he had vanished again. You see, he was not only reckoned mad by the country people. He had strange hallucinations. He believed he was dead, passing through a purgatory of

fire and blood, to a heavenly region of fair cities set on the mountain. And he wandered across the frontier to this place, playing on a little marimba a parish priest had given him.

"There's something in the general impression among the country people that he was a saint, that he had never committed any sins. I doubt if he has. And when you said he seemed the happiest person on earth I raised the question, you remember, whether he could be described that way. After all, it is not a matter of great importance. He was only, as I said before, an embodiment of the destiny of Don Carlos Goenaga, who was himself an embodiment of his country's fortune."

"And Da Costa," I said meditatively. "I should say he was an embodiment of something too."

"Of his country's misfortune," remarked Rogerson slowly. "He was part of the scene. I told you he is buried under a white marble tomb with weeping angels and with an inscription detailing his extraordinary virtues. Miss Isabella Varela is buried in a convent, a prisoner for life. One evening, as the new Minister was stepping into his carriage to attend an official dinner, a young woman came forward, fired point blank, and Doctor Germán Lopez Da Costa fell into the brougham, face downward, dead. Yes, she is buried under heavy stonework, in the convent of Our Lady of Sorrows. And I would say she was an embodiment of something too, an embodiment of a pure spirit, with an indomitable courage and faith, worthy of the young man whom she loved. They were so much alike in many ways, but above all they gave you the same feeling that their souls were true. They were straight and sharp like swords and with untarnished honour."

THE END

WILLIAM McFEE

Ten odd years ago when William McFee's *Casuals of the Sea* first appeared in America, James Huneker greeted it with exclamations of acclaim, saying that it "reeked with actuality." And the phrase of the Steeplejack could be applied with equal truth to all of McFee's books, for he knows life first hand and translates it into his books with a buoyant and romantic realism. Ever since he was born, forty-eight years ago aboard his father's barque, *The Erin's Isle*, McFee has been dedicated to the sea—but, being a hard-headed realist, he put his faith in steam instead of sail. As chief engineer he has steamed into every port of the Mediterranean and plowed the Spanish Main with the great white ships of the fruit trade. Now, since he has left the sea to devote his entire time to writing, the urge still comes to escape from the confusion of life ashore. At such times he will stick a manuscript under his arm and sail to the Mediterranean or his old haunts on the Caribbean. Since *Casuals of the Sea* five full-bodied novels have come from his pen: *Aliens*, *Captain Macedoine's Daughter*, *Command*, *Race*, and *Pilgrims of Adversity*. There have been several volumes of sketches, essays, and short stories. One of them, a volume of rich and delightful reminiscences, is entitled *Harbours of Memory*.

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